THE LEGEND OF

ZELDA™

ART & ARTIFACTS

HYRULE GRAPHICS

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ART & ARTIFACTS

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HEIDI PLECHL • MICHAEL GOMBOS

All concept illustrations that originally contained handwritten notes in Japanese have been translated into English for this book.

DARK HORSE BOOKS

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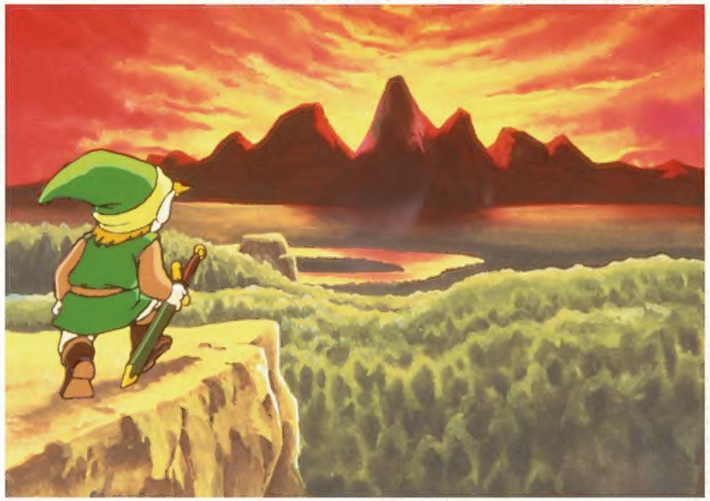

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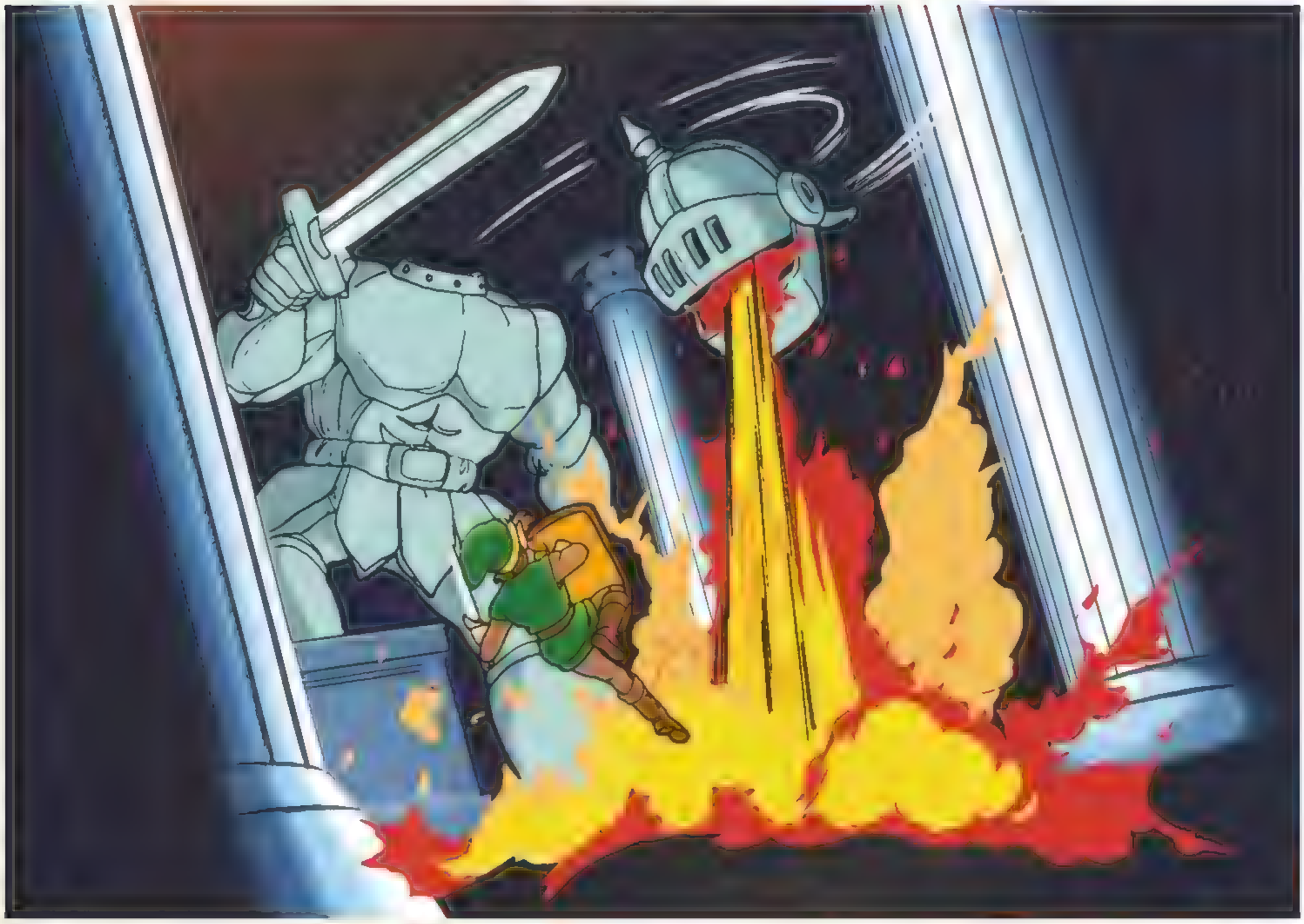

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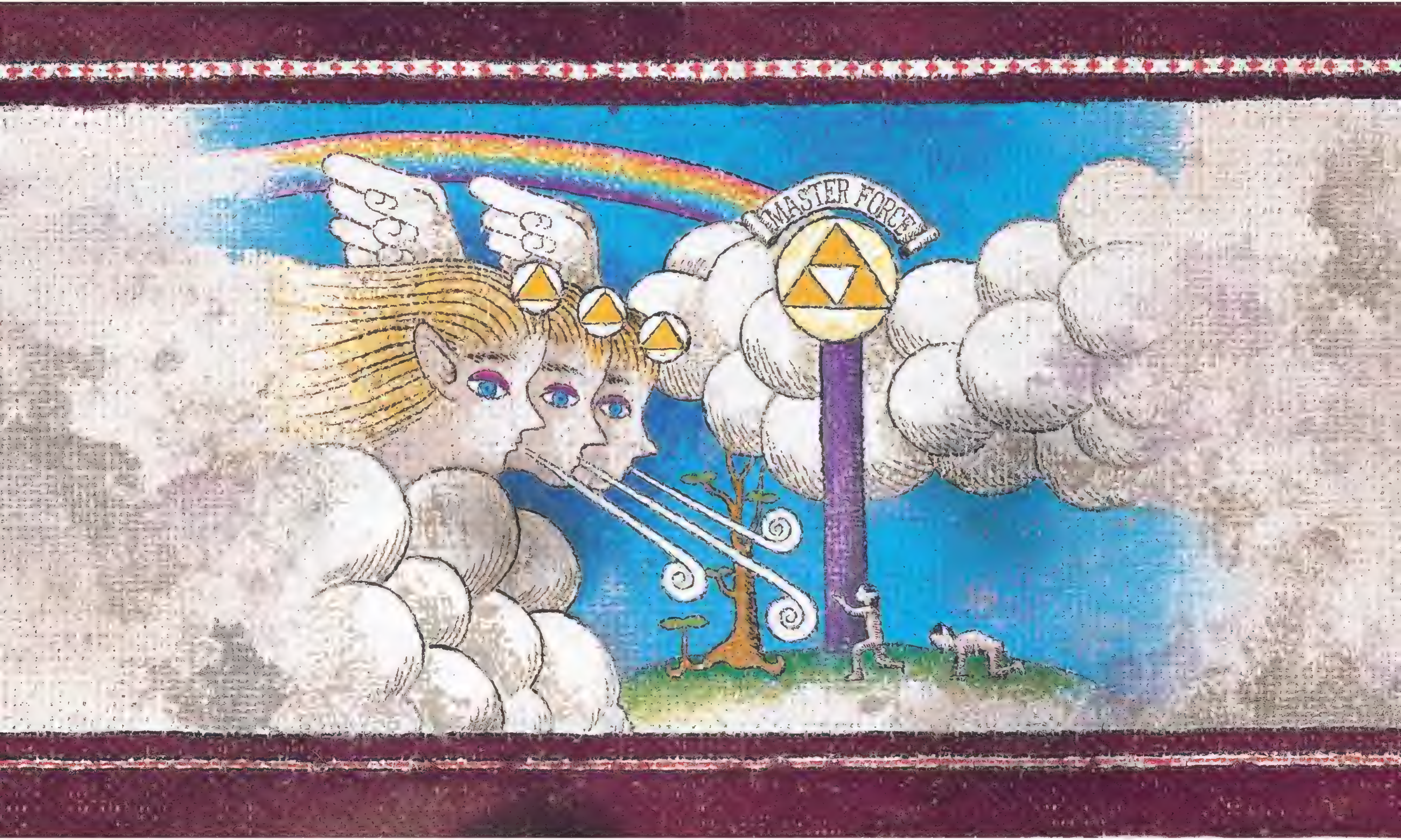
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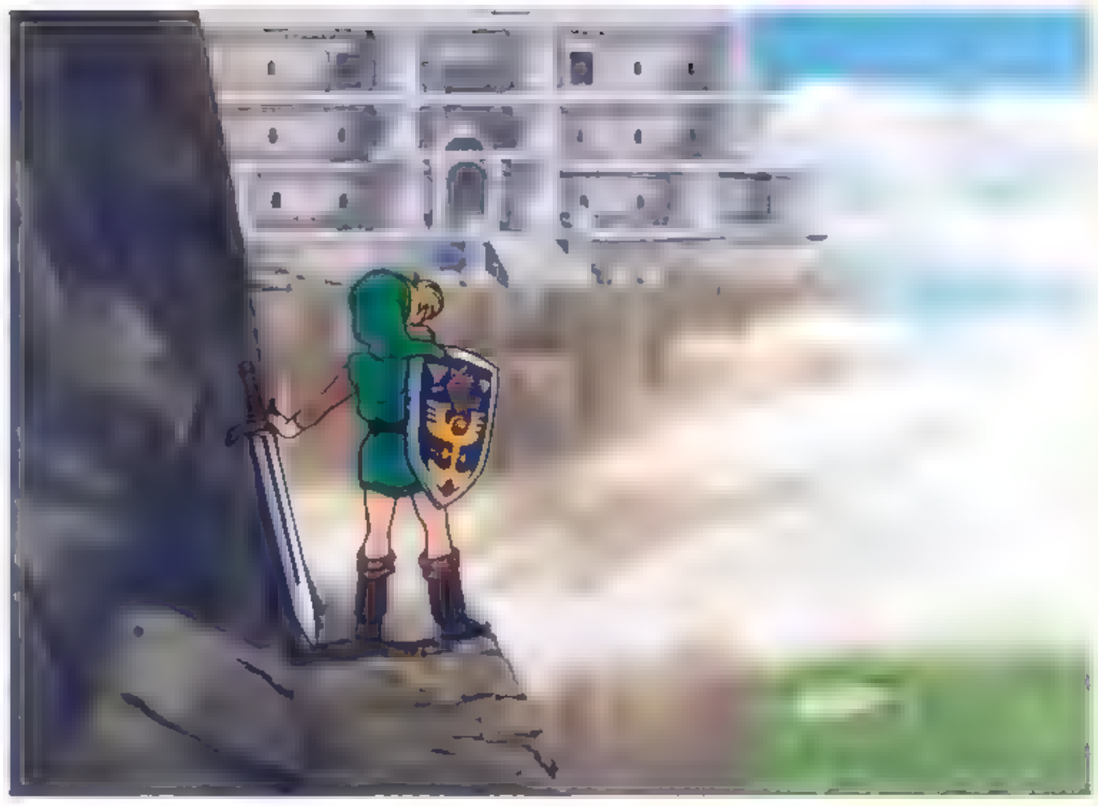

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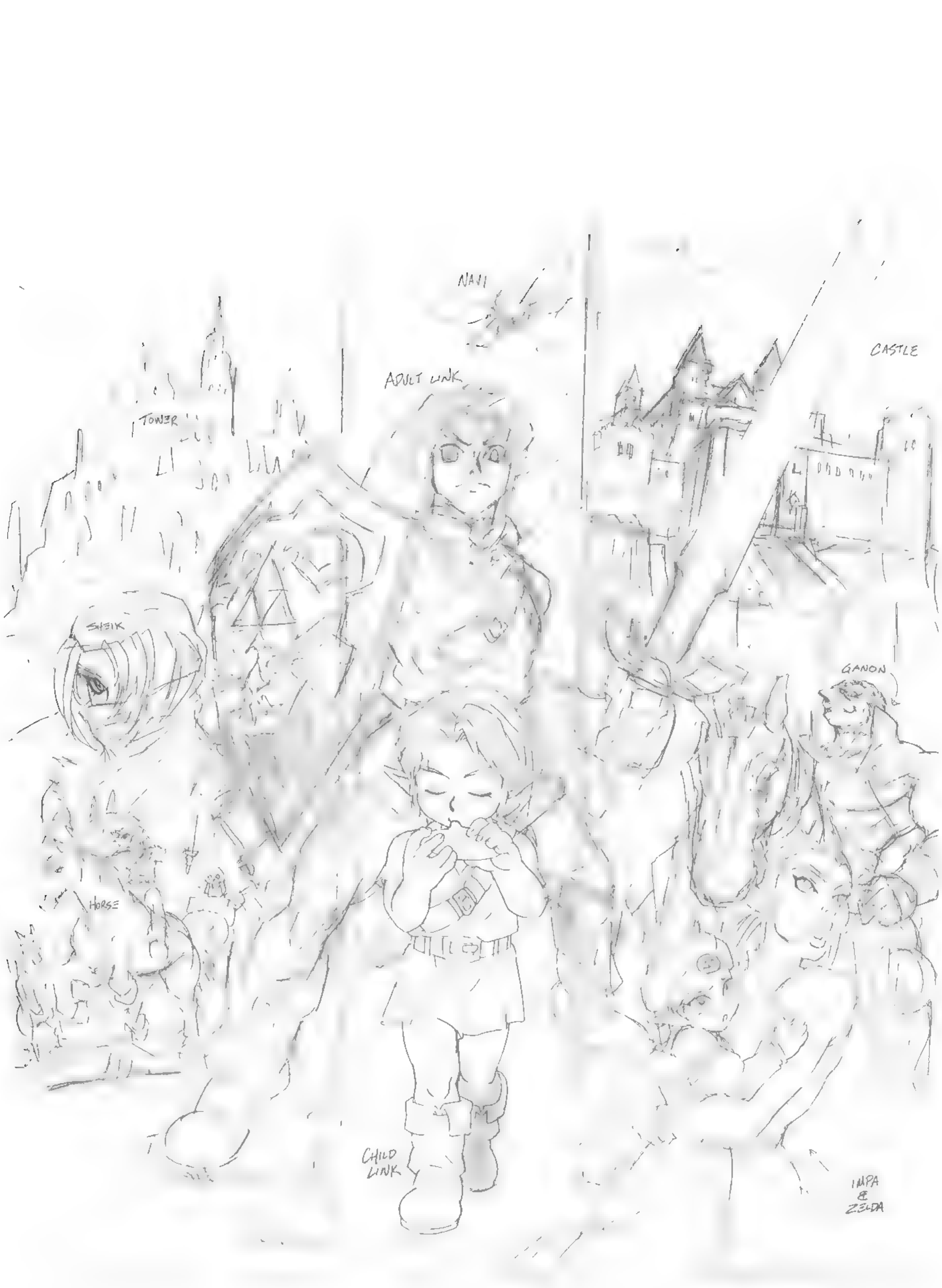
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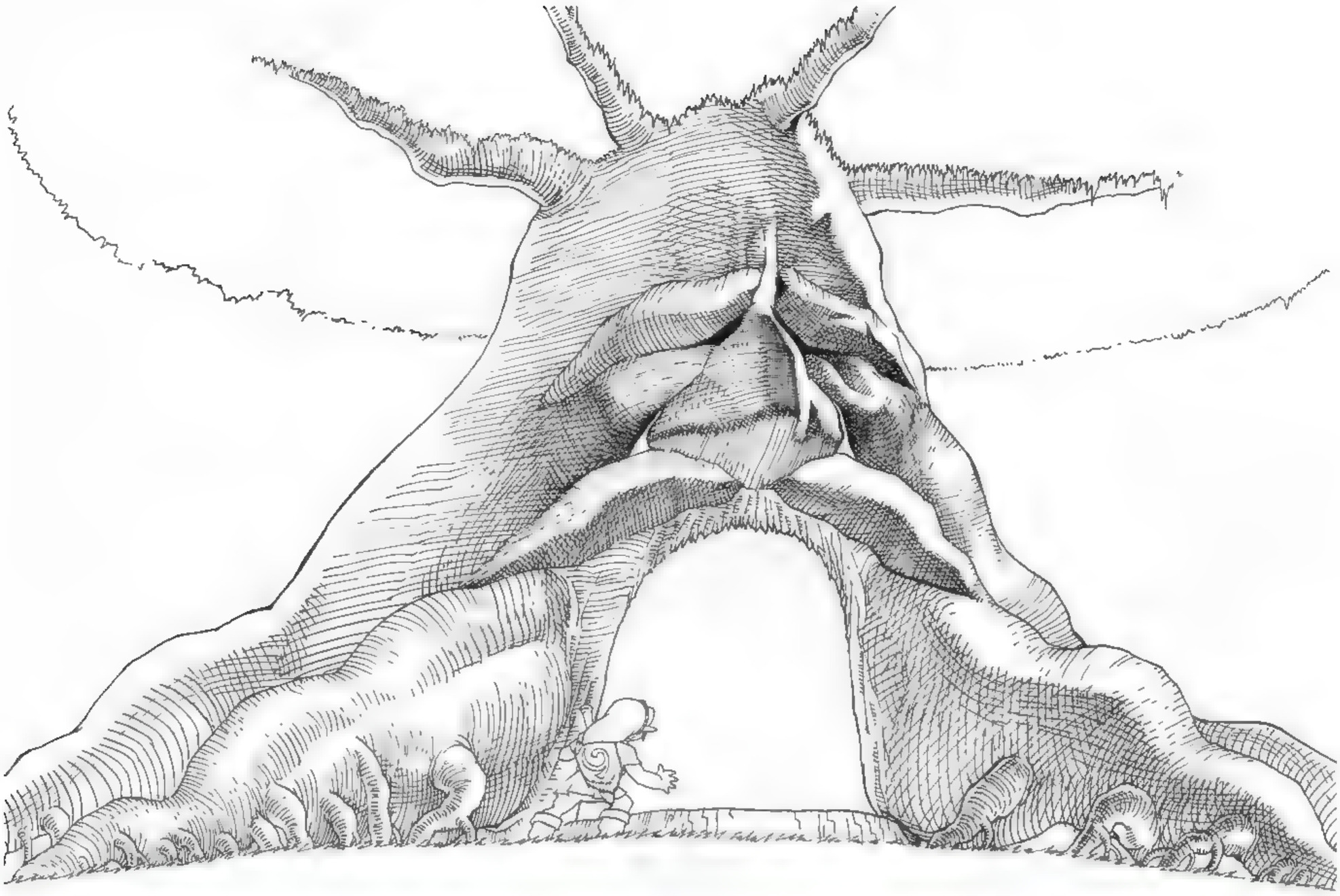
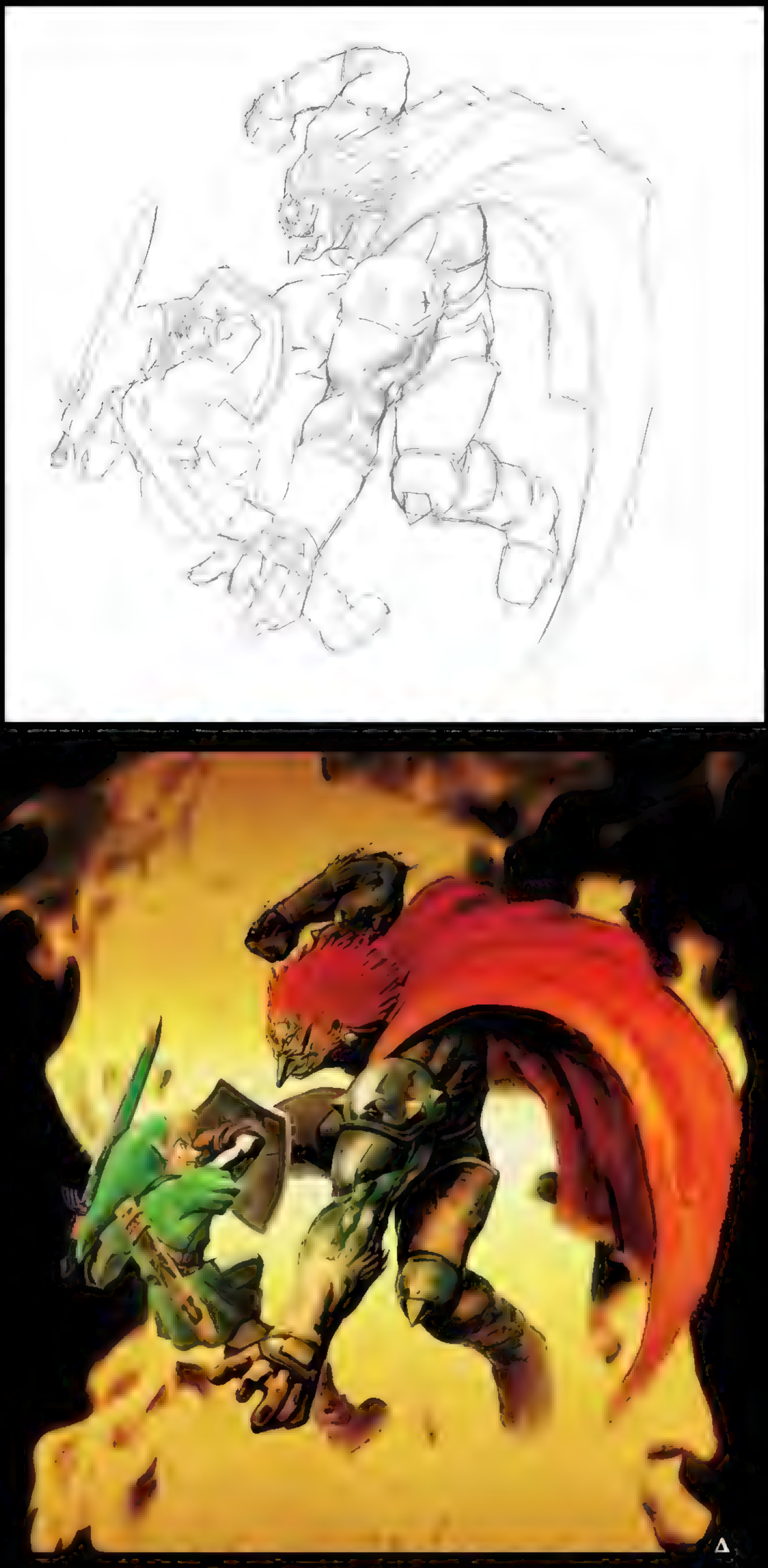
GANON
HORSE
CHILD LINK
IMPA & ZELDA

DARK CLOUDS
TOWER





Preliminary Sketch

Preliminary Sketch

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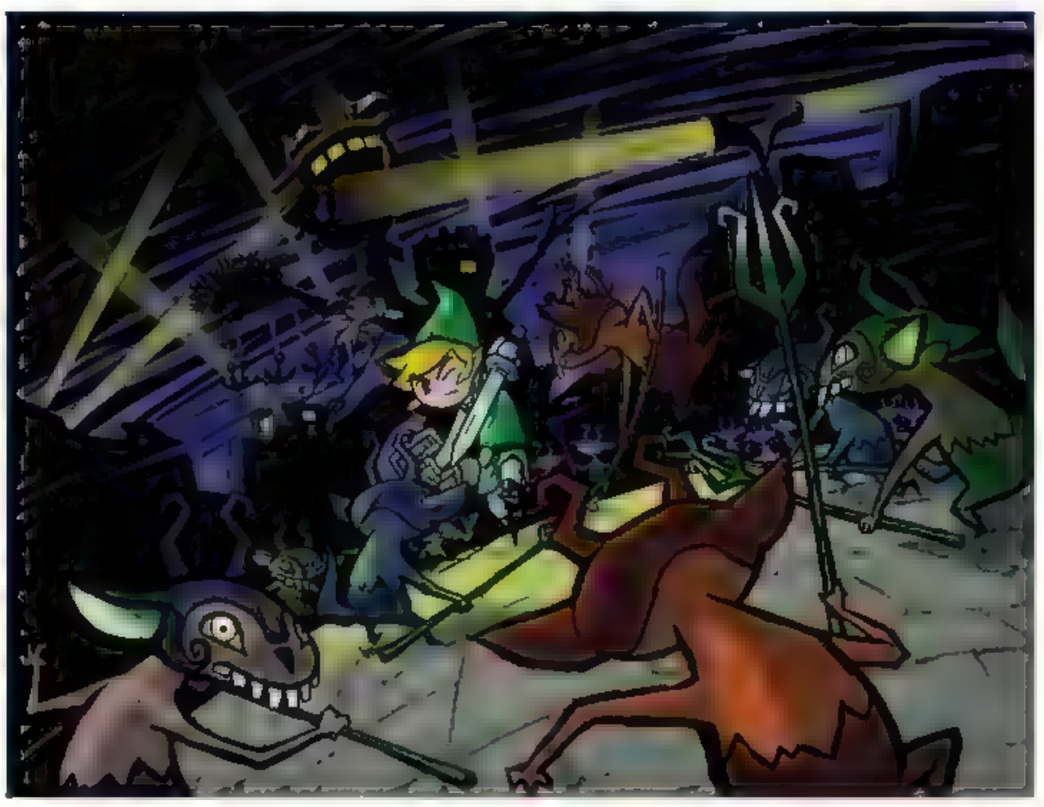

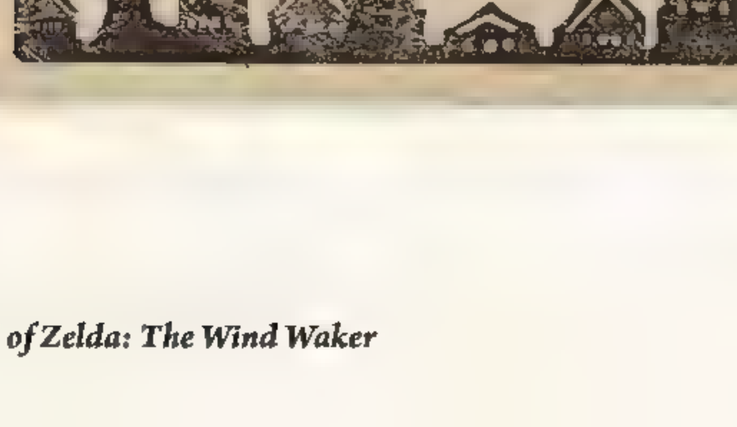

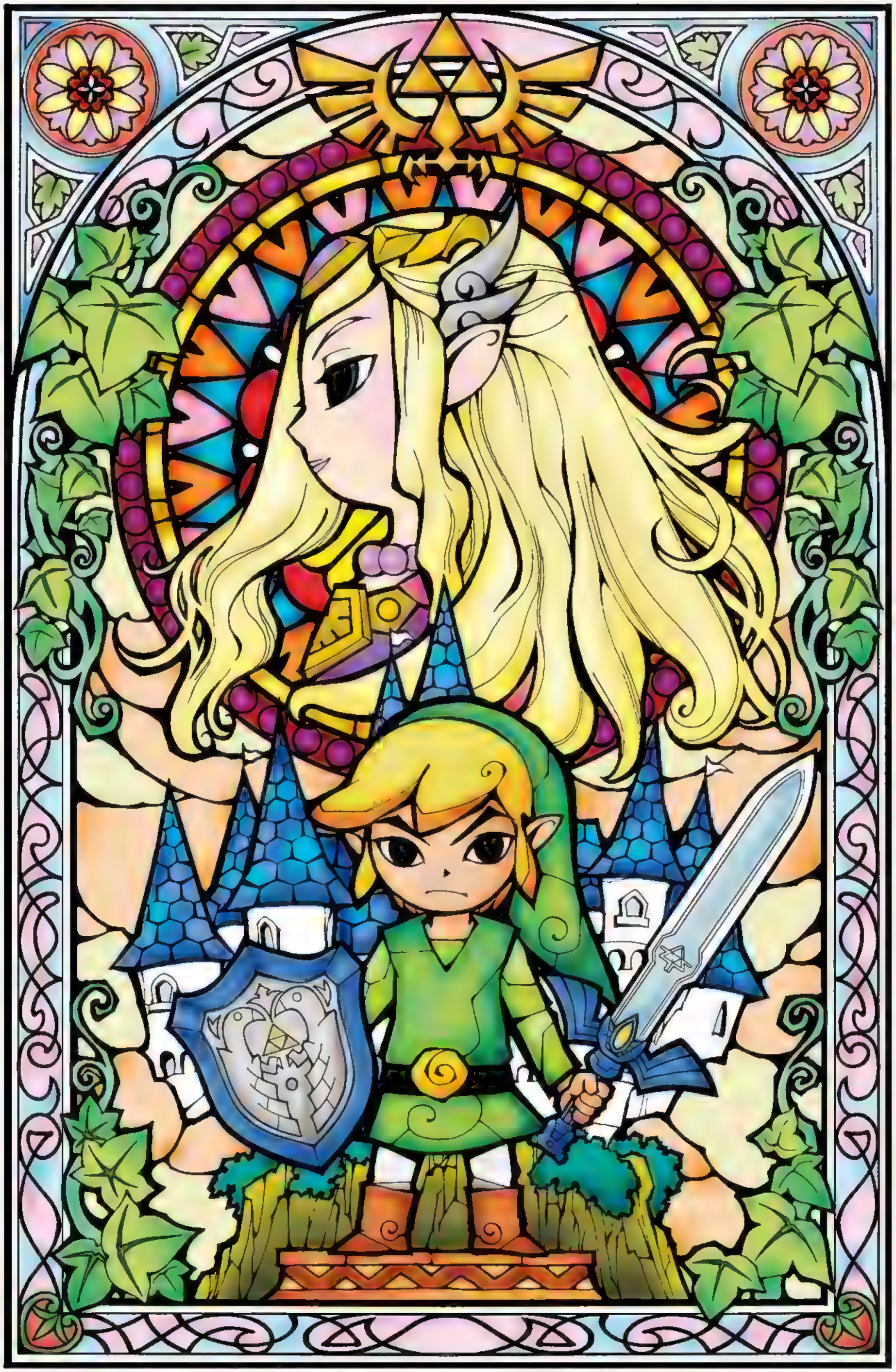

The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures

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ZELDA™

Twilight Princess

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess

Preliminary Sketch

Preliminary Sketch

Preliminary Sketch

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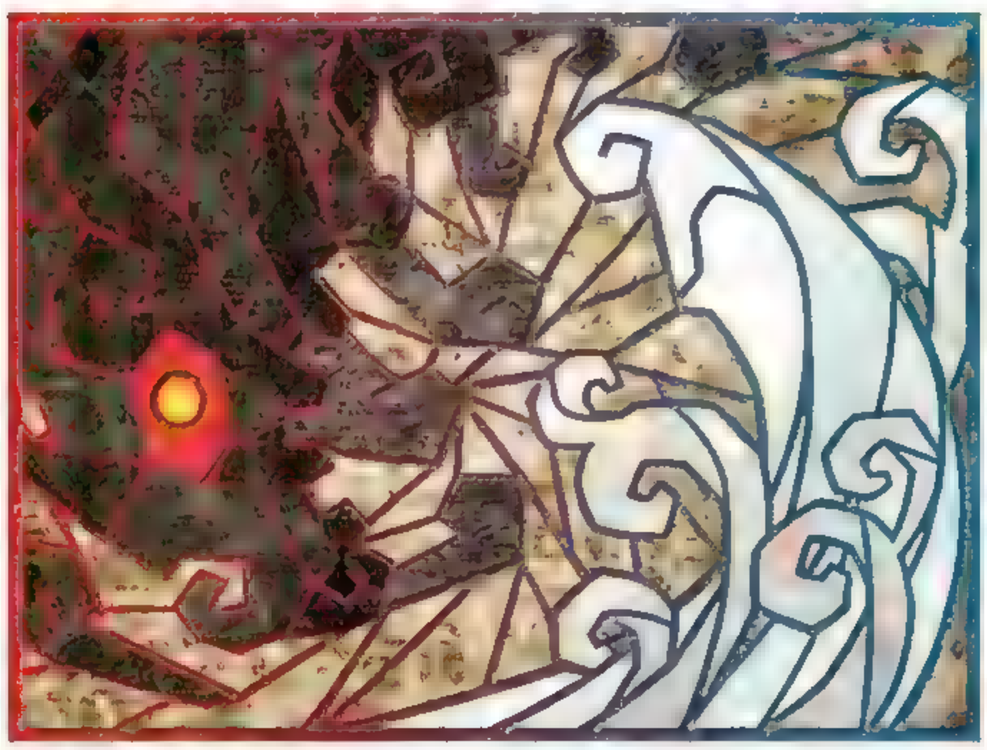
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks



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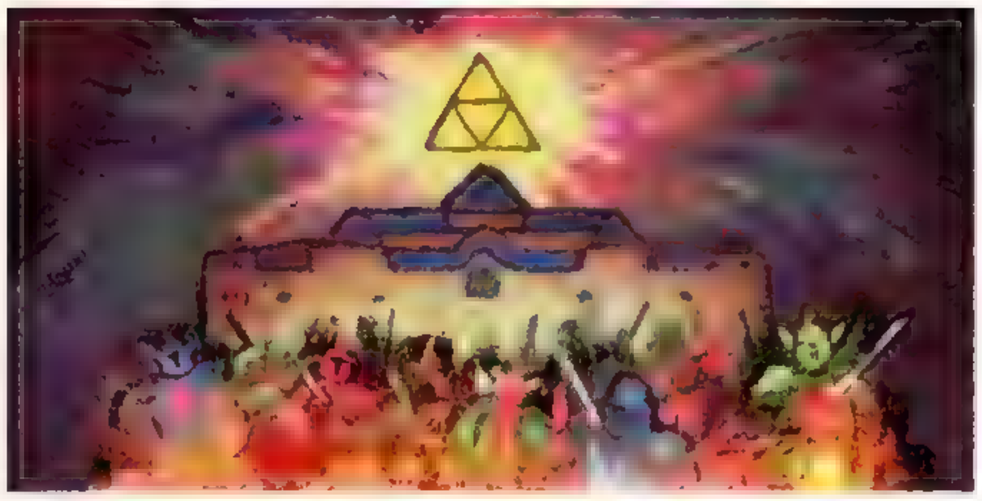
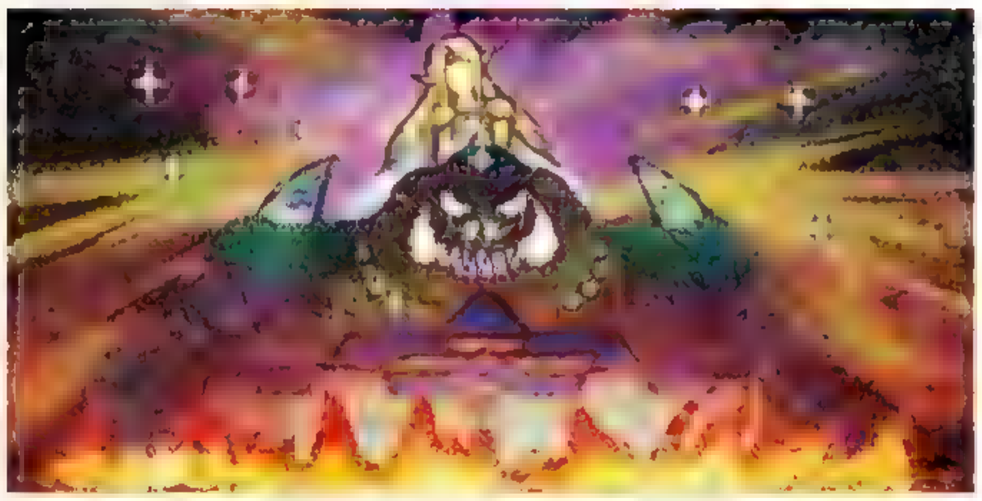
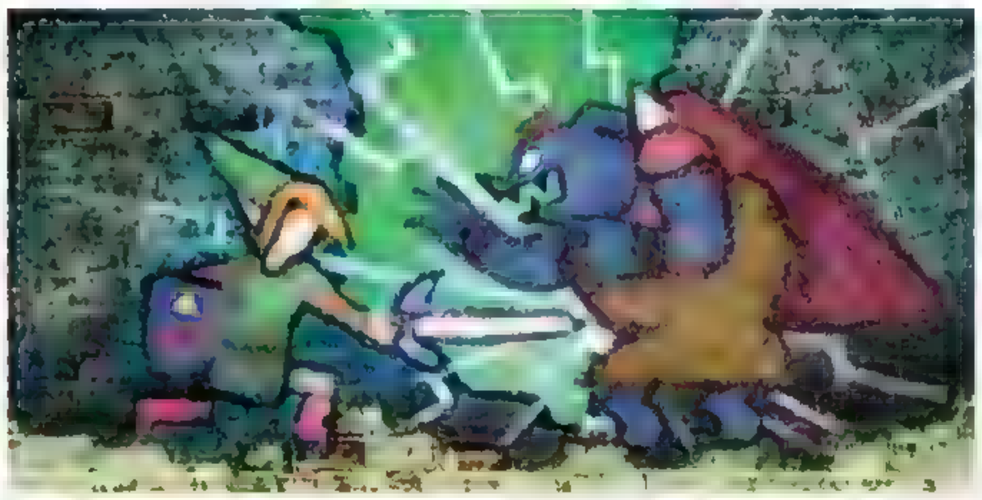
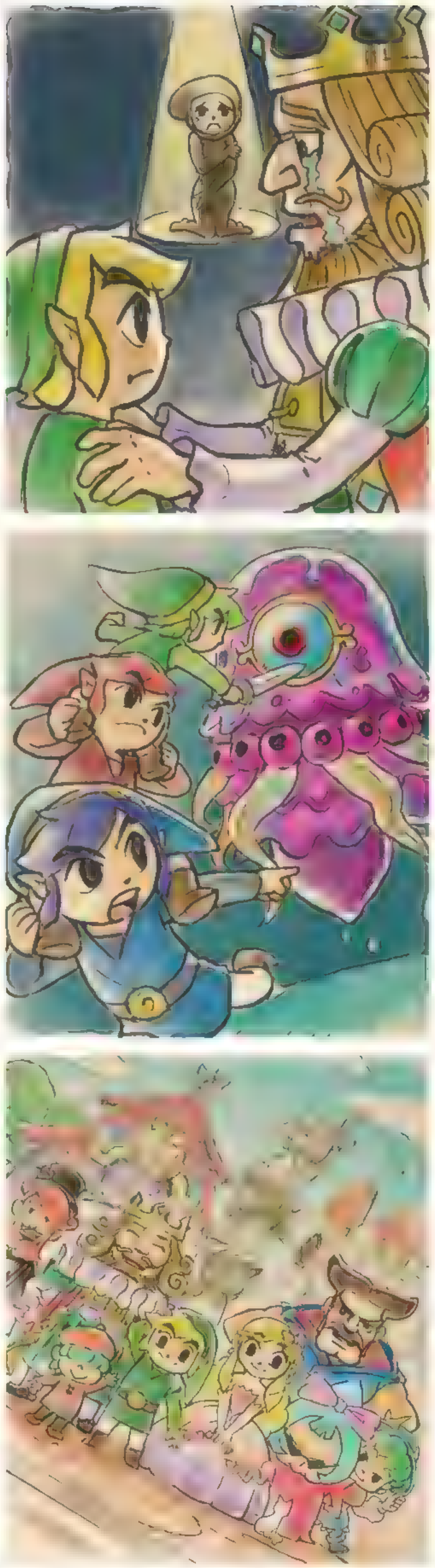








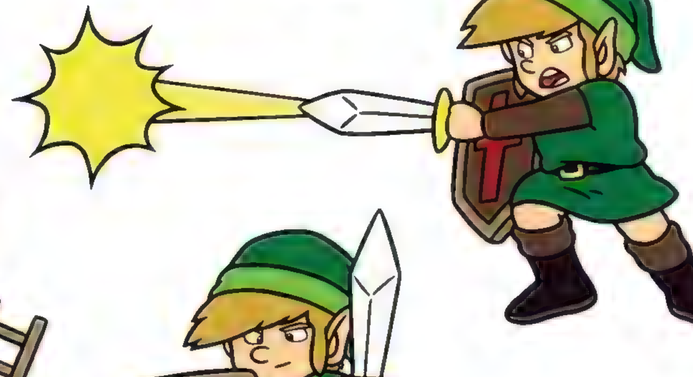
Character Illustrations

Friends and Foes

The Legend of
ZELDA

Link

CHARACTERS



Fairy

Princess Zelda

Impa

Merchant

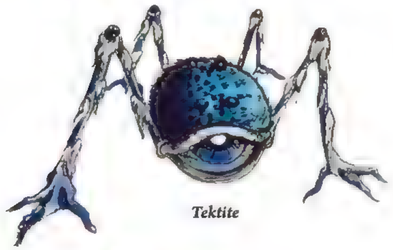
Enemies

Vire

Moblin

Armos

Keese

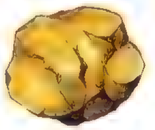


Tektite

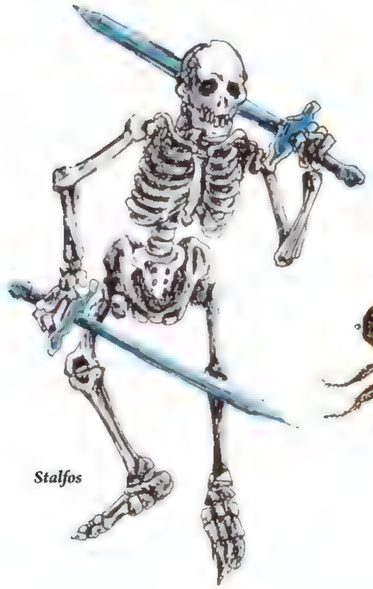
Lynel

Leever

Peahat



Rock



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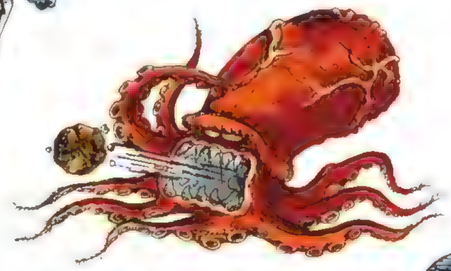
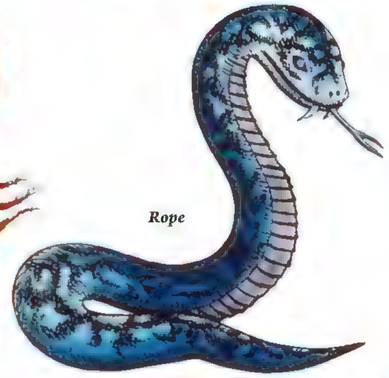


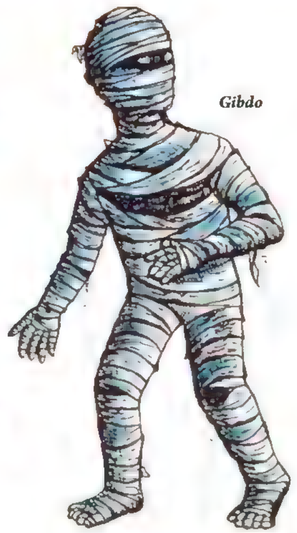
Octorok



Rope

Goriya

Wallmaster



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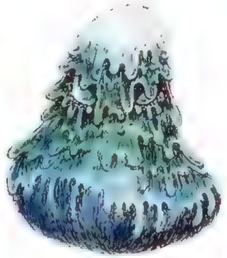
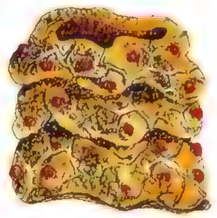


Zol

Gel

Pols Voice



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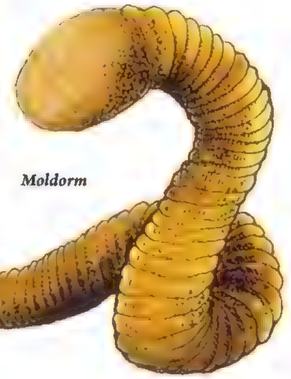
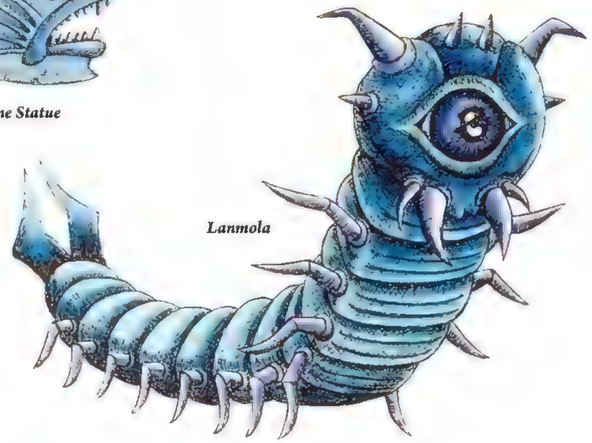


Moldorm

Bubble

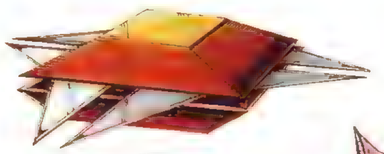
Wizzrobe

Stone Statue



Lanmola

Darknut



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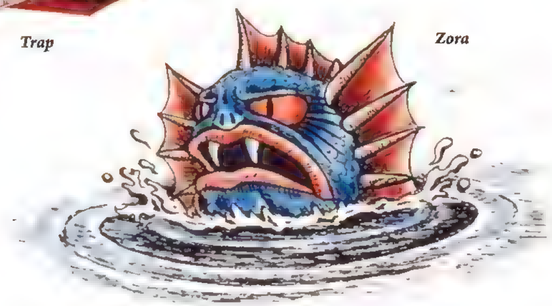
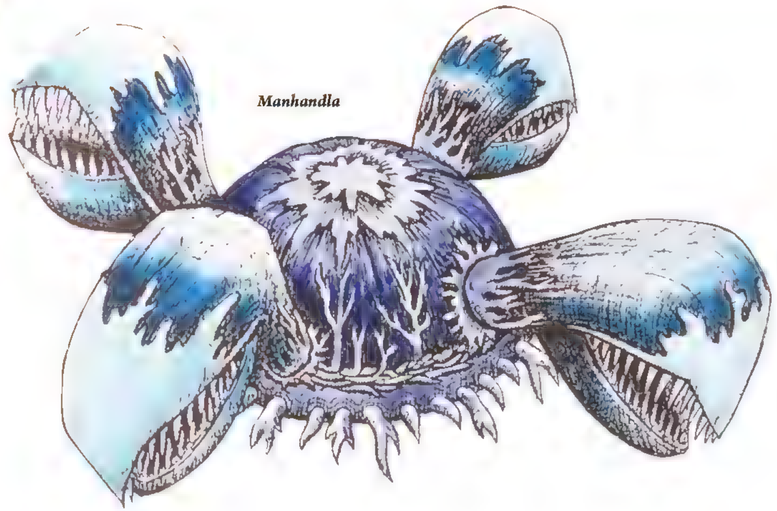


Zora

Dodongo

Ghini

Aquamentus



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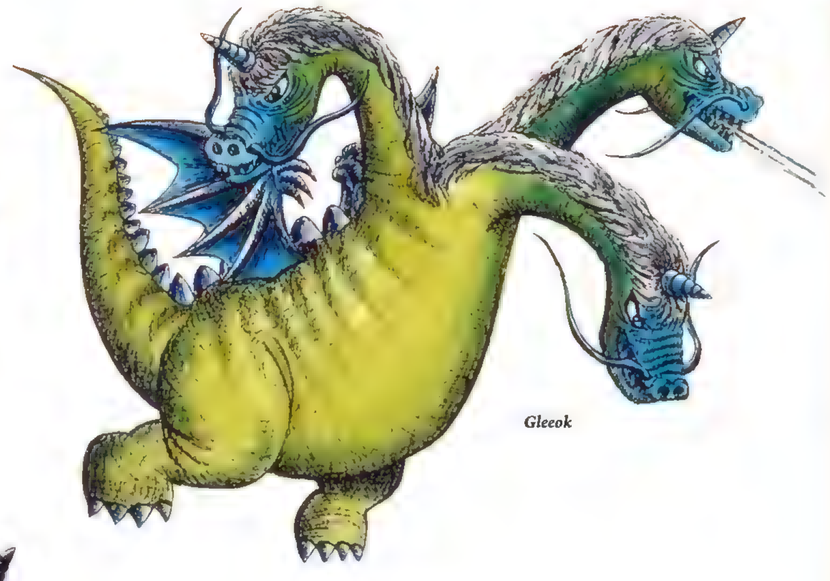
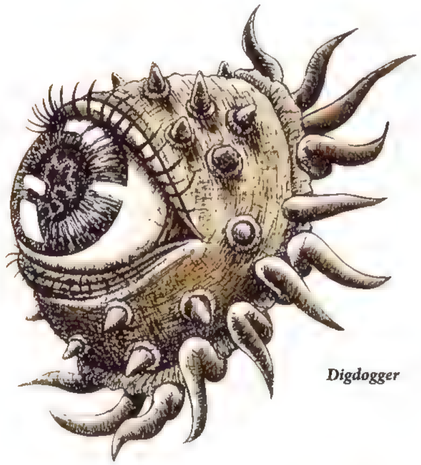
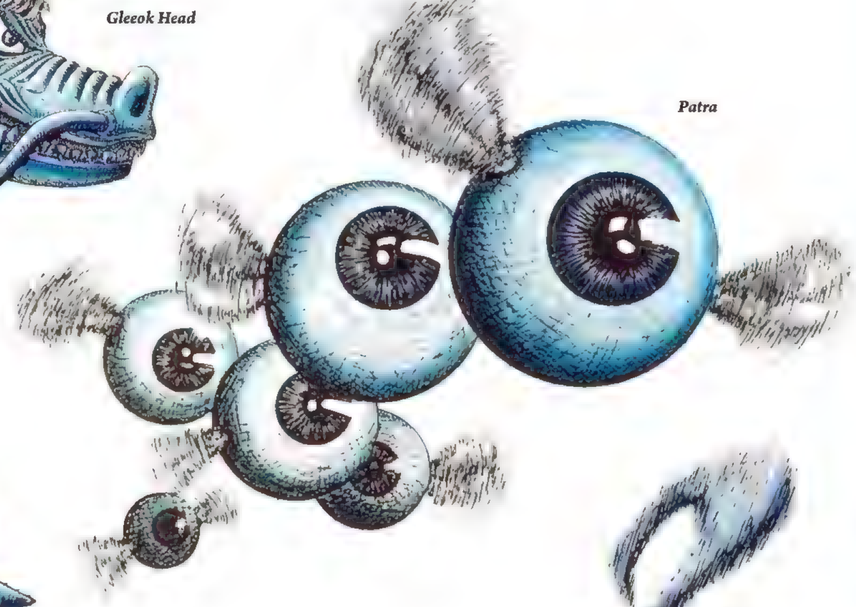


Gleeok



Digdogger

Gleeok Head



Patra

Gohma

Teaser Image for Ganon

Items

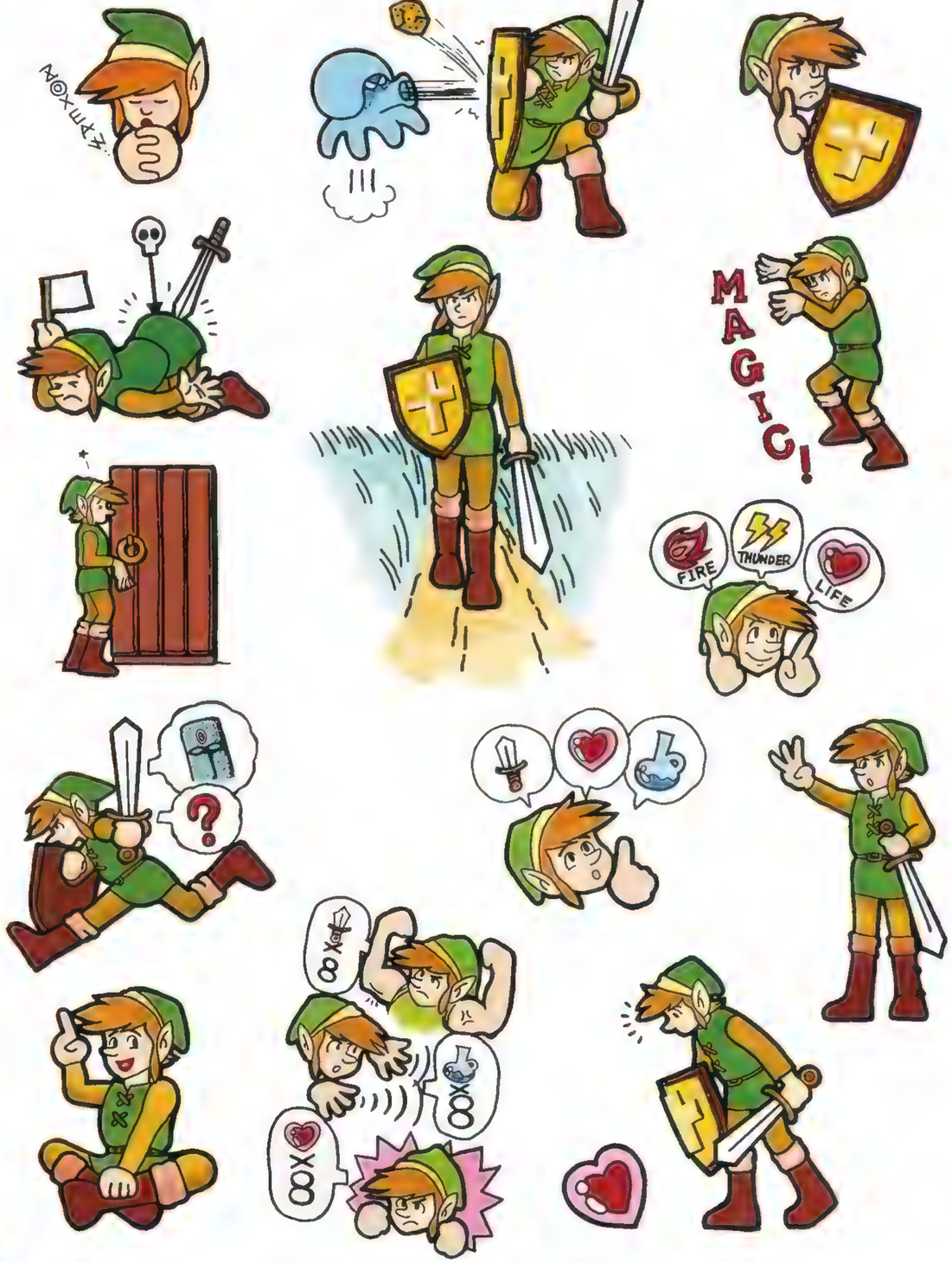
The Adventure of LINK

CHARACTERS

Link

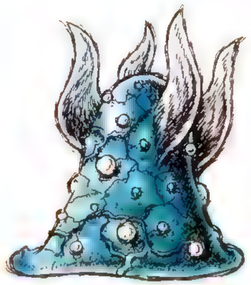
Bot

Fairy



Magical Sword

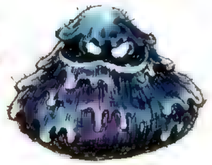
Enemies



Leever

Aruroda

Bit



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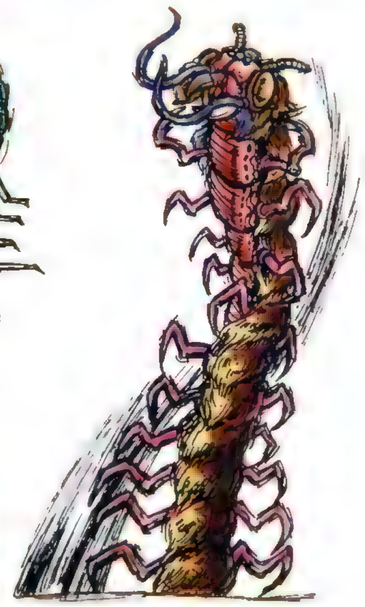


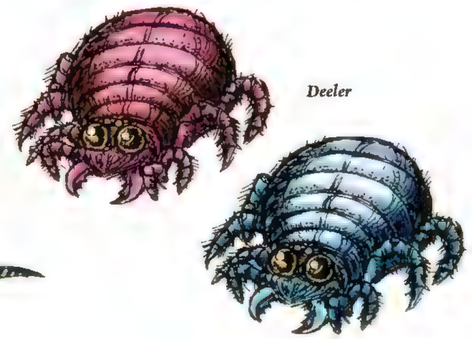
Geldarm

Moby

Goriya

Tektite

Megmat

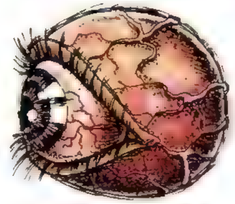


Deeler

Geru

Moblin

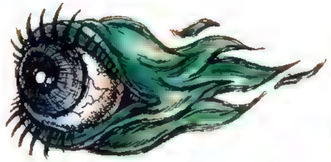
Boon



Girubokku

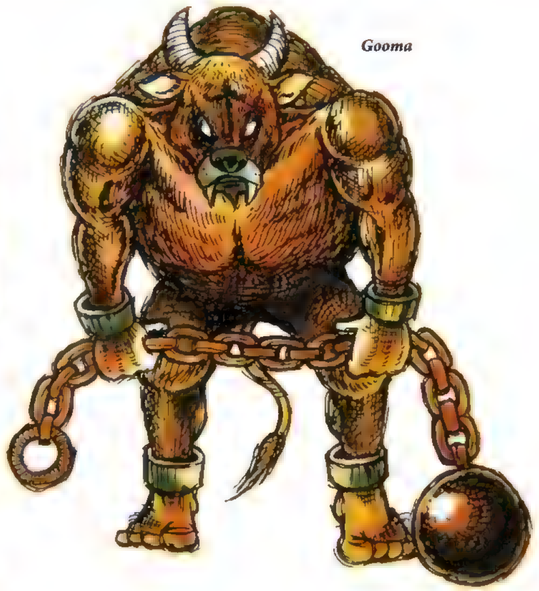
Ache

Daira



Moa

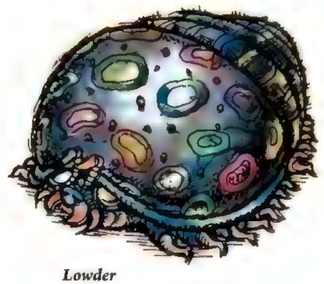
Acheman



Gooma

Bago-Bago

Zora



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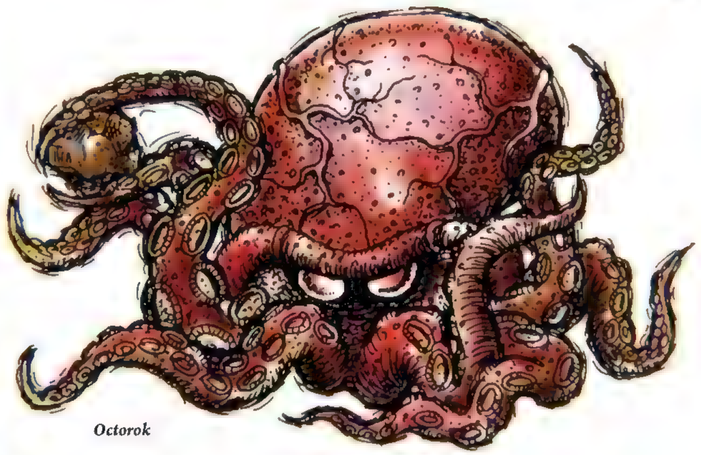
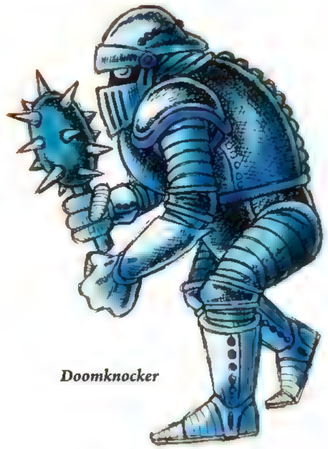


Octorok

Wizard



Doomknocker

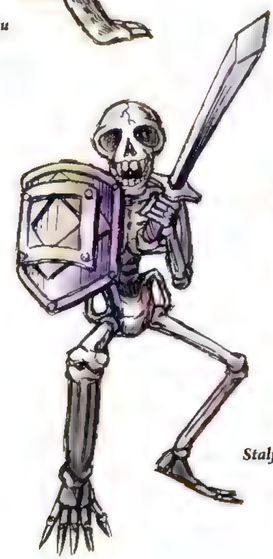
Fokka

Mago

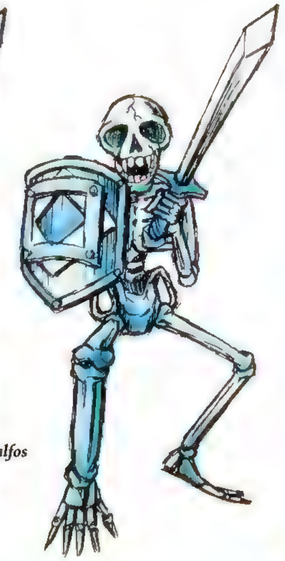
Iron Knuckle

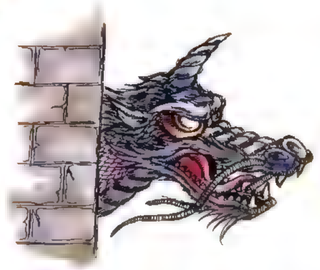
Wosu

Myu



Stalfos

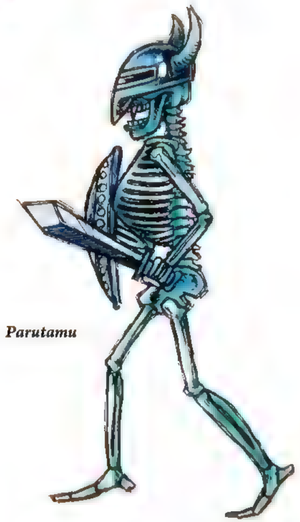




Ra

Mau

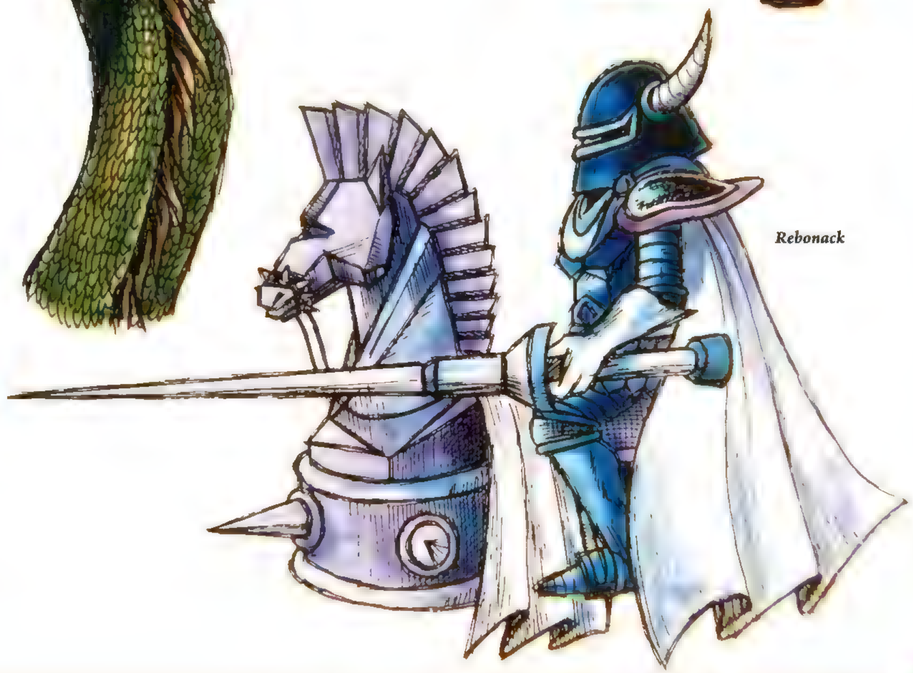
Mazura



Parutamu

Barba

Jermafenser



Rebonack

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®
A LINK TO THE PAST®

Characters

Link

Δ

Δ

Δ

Δ

Δ

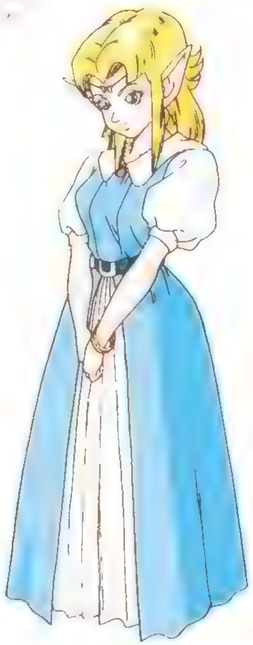
Δ

Δ

Princess Zelda

Fairy

Δ



Δ

Link's Uncle

Sahasrahla

Agahnim

Δ

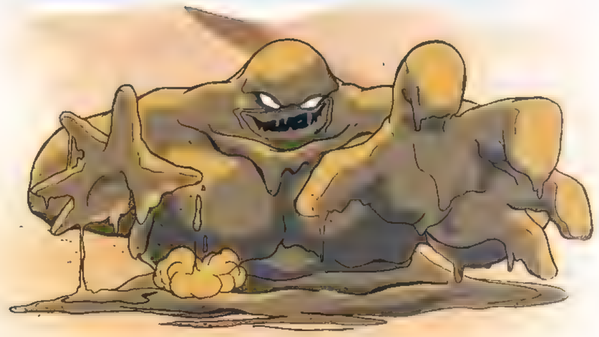
Ganon

Enemies

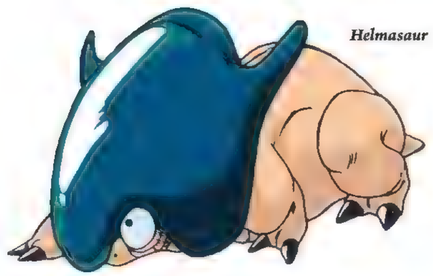
Ball & Chain Trooper

Δ

Geldman



Helmasaur



Snap Dragon

Hinox

Wizzrobe

Daira

Stalfos Knight

Gibdo

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®
LINK'S AWAKENING™

Link

Marin

Characters

Marin

Tarin

Owl

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
OCARINA OF TIME™

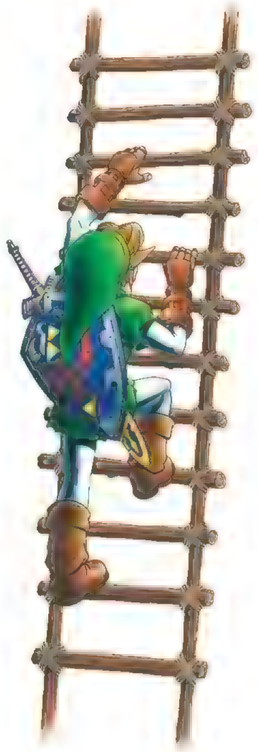
CHARACTERS

Link

Navi

Epona

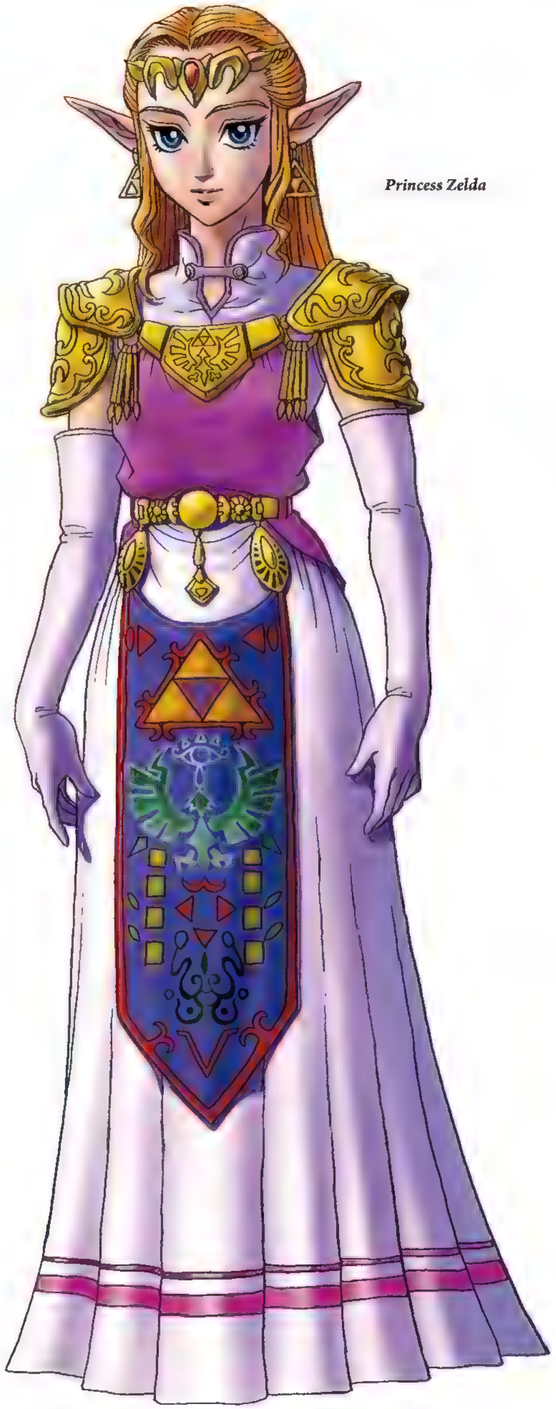
Δ



Child Link

Δ

Child Zelda



Princess Zelda

Δ

Sheik

Rauru

Impa

Kaepora Gaebora

Ganondorf

Δ

Ganon

Nabooru

Talon

Ingo

Malon

Mido

Kokiri Tribe

Saria

Skull Kid

Darunia

Goron Tribe

Zora Tribe

King Zora

Princess Ruto

Enemies

Deku Baba

Deku Scrub

Poe

Skulltula

Dodongo

ReDead

Lizalfos

Armos

Tektite

Biri and Bari

Baby Dodongo

Octorok

Moblin

Big Octo

Great Moblin

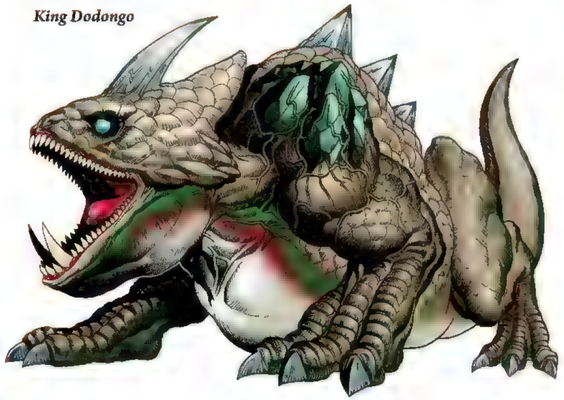
Stalfos

Bubble

Leever

Iron Knuckle

Phantom Ganon



King Dodongo

Barinade

Gohma

Bongo Bongo

Volvagia

Kotake

Koume

Twinrova

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®
MAJORA'S MASK™

Characters

Link

Tatl

Δ

Δ

Epona

Deku Link

Goron Link

Zora Link

Happy Mask Salesman

Fierce Deity Link

Skull Kid

Tael

Majora's Mask

Δ

Δ

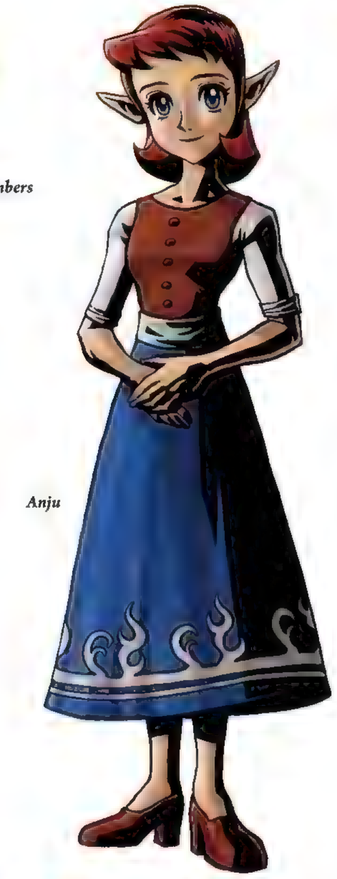
Δ

Great Fairy

Δ

Bombers

Jim



Anju

Kafei

Kaepora Gaebora

Δ

Stray Fairy

Δ

Mayor Dotour

Madame Aroma

Man from Curiosity Shop Δ

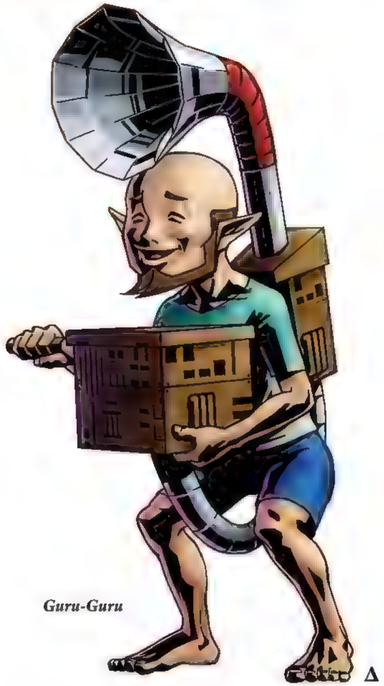
Sakon Δ

??? Δ

Cremia

Romani

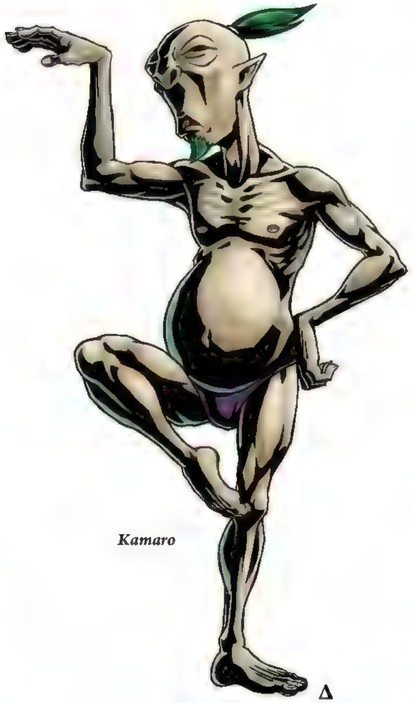
Postman



Guru-Guru Δ

Gorman Δ

Judo Marilla Δ



Kamaro Δ

Tingle

Deku Butler's Son

Monkey

Deku Butler

Deku Princess

Deku King

Deku Tribe

Goron Tribe

Gabora and Zubora

Darmani III

Goron Elder's Son

Goron Elder

Toto

Japas

Tijo

Lulu

Mikau

Evan

Enemies

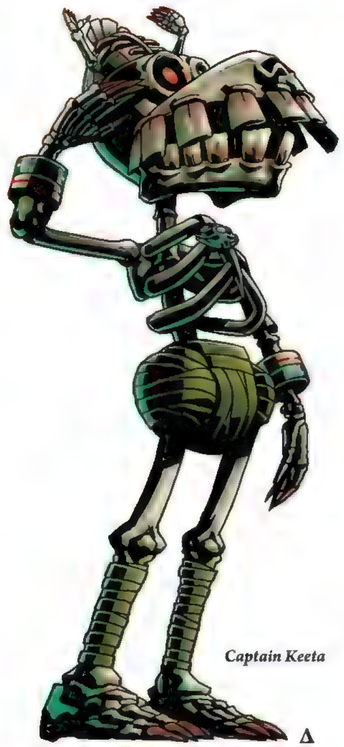
Garo

Poe Collector Δ

Pamela's Father

Pamela

Igos du Ikana and Soldiers



Captain Keeta Δ

Odolwa

Goht

Gyorg

Twinmold

Items

Masks

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA ORACLE OF AGES

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA ORACLE OF SEASONS

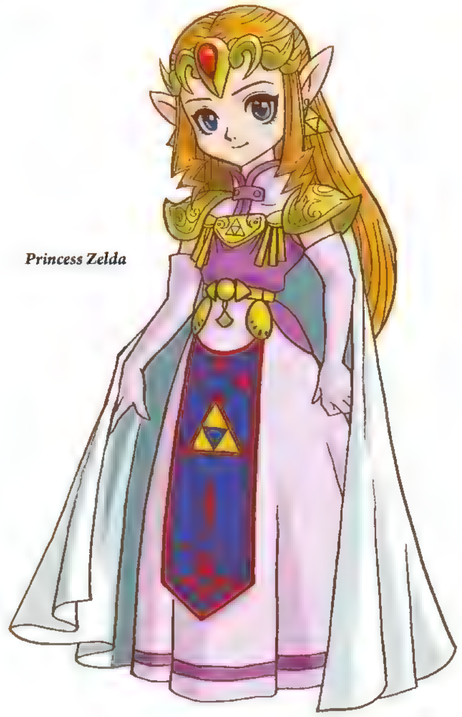
Characters

Link

Ricky

Moosh

Dimitri



Princess Zelda

Impa

Blossom *Bipin*

Syrup

Vasu

Stockwell

Farore

Maple

Goron Tribe

Cap'n and Pirates

Din

Maku Tree

Malon

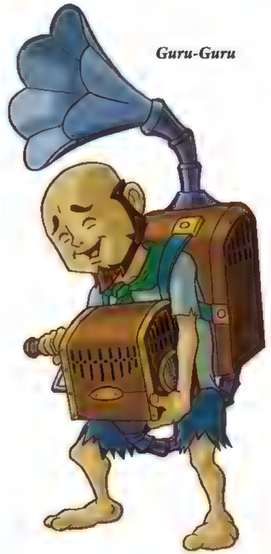
Talon

Inga

Tick Tock

Mittens

Old Man



Guru-Guru

Ingo

Mayor Ruul

Sokra

Dr. Left

Subrosian Tribe

Rosa

Nayru

Queen Ambi

Comedian and Sidekick

Ralph

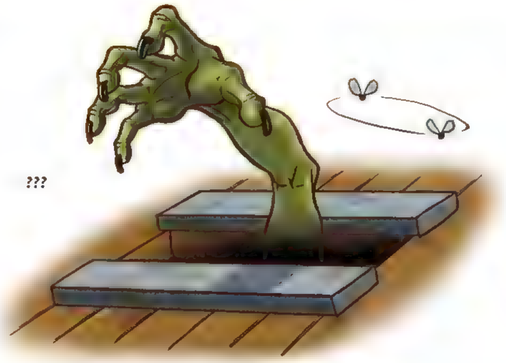
Adlar

Pippin

Dekadin

Rafton

Postman



???

Mayor Plen

Tingle

Tokkey

Thomas

Maku Tree

Happy Mask Salesman

Cheval

Dr. Troy

Mamamu Yan

Forest Fairy

Maku Sprout

Enemies

Patch

Carpenter Boss and Carpenters

General Onox

Veran

Zora Tribe

Old Zora

Tokay

Great Moblin

Twinrova

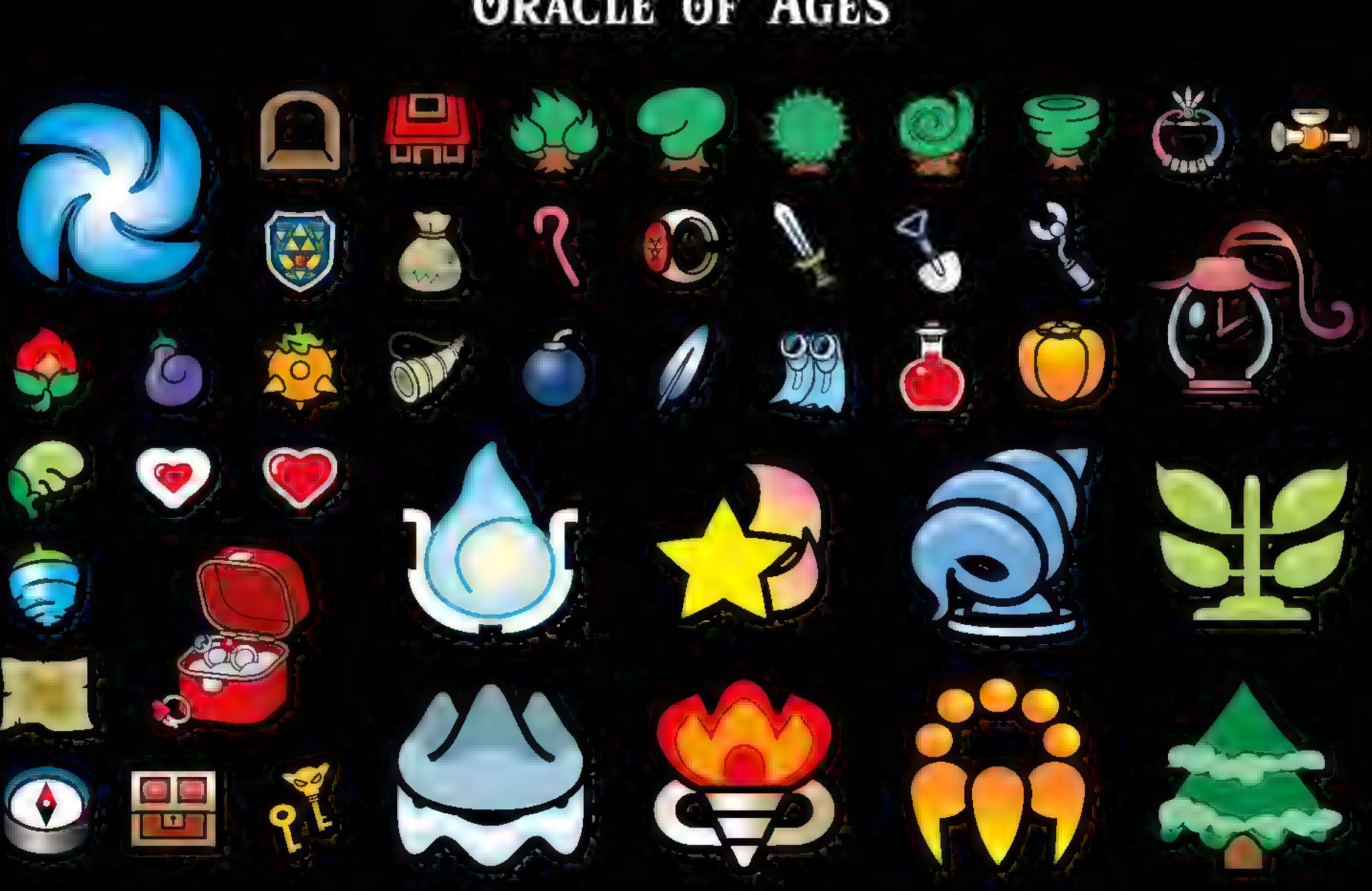
Vire

Ganon

Items

Oracle of Seasons

Oracle of Ages



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA® the Wind Waker

Link

Δ

Δ

Characters

Link and King of Red Lions

Δ

Princess Zelda

Δ

Tetra

Δ

Δ

Ganondorf

Δ

Aryll Δ

Link's Grandma Δ

Niko Δ

Gonzo Δ

Nudge

Mako

Zuko

Senza

Medli

Δ

Laruto

Δ

Fairy Queen

Δ

Great Fairy

Fado

Δ

Makar

Δ

Sue-Belle

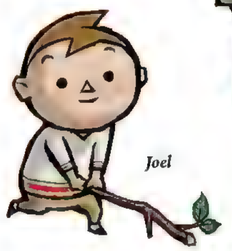
Sturgeon

Orca

Abe

Rose

Mesa



Joel

Zill

Jabun

Zunari

Doc Bandam

Mila

Mila's Father

Tott

Lenzo

Maggie's Father

Maggie

Mrs. Marie

Ivan

Jin

Jan

Jun-Roberto

Komali

Δ

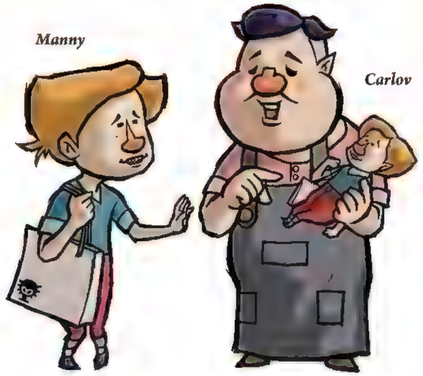
Rito Chieftan

Quill

Δ

Zephos

Cyclos



Manny

Carlov

Irch Oakin Rown Hollo Linder Olivio

Valoo

Deku Tree

Tingle

Ankle

Knuckle

David Jr.

Δ

Salvatore

Wandering Merchant

Beedle

Δ

Fairy

Δ

Seagulls

Δ

Fishman

Δ

King of Hyrule

Enemies

Bokoblin

Moblin

Stalfos

Kargaroc

Mothula

Gyorg

ChuChu

ReDead

Armos Knight

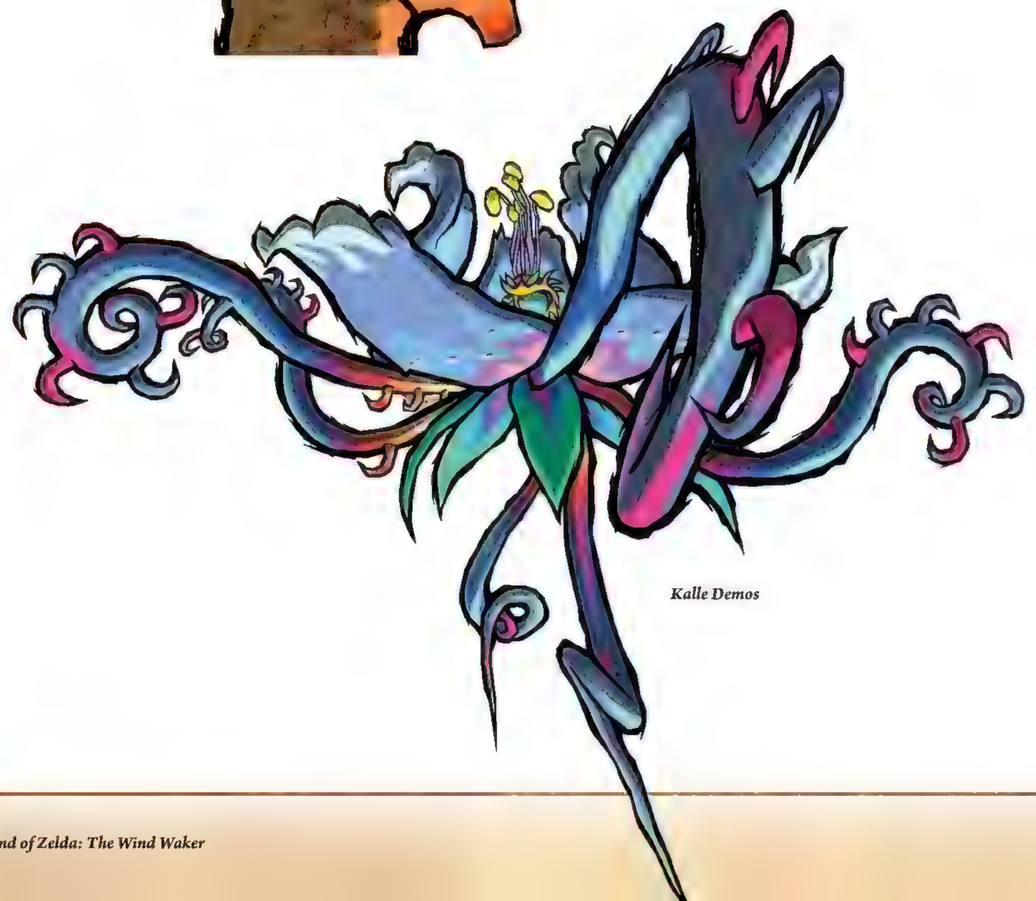
Wizzrobe

Darknut

Mighty Darknut

Phantom Ganon

Gohma



Kalle Demos

Gohdan

Helmaroc King

Molgera

Jalhalla

Puppet Ganon

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®
A LINK TO THE PAST®

Includes new multiplayer adventure
Four Swords

Links

Characters

Stray Fairy

Princess Zelda

Great Fairy of Ice

Great Fairy of Flame

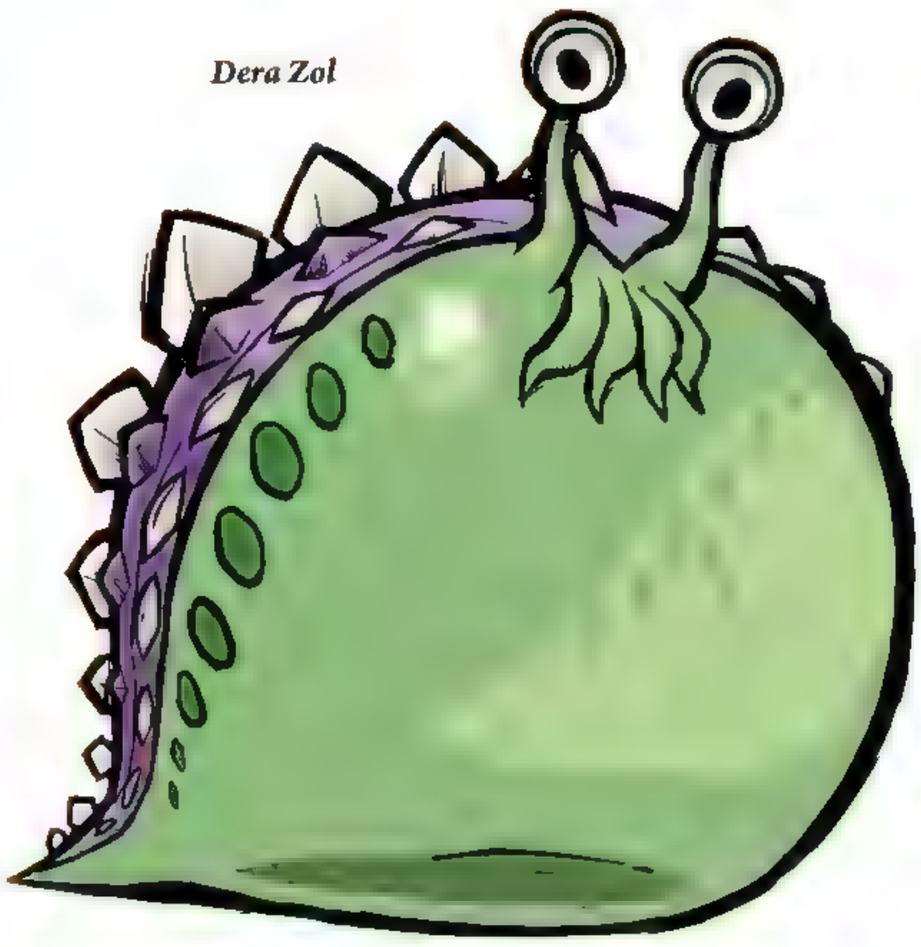
Great Fairy of Forest

Enemies

Hikkun

Rupee Wraith

Manhandla



Dera Zol

Gouen

Vaati

Items

Links

Characters

Tingle

Tetra

Gonzo

Senza

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®
The Minish Cap

Characters

Ezlo

Link

Minish

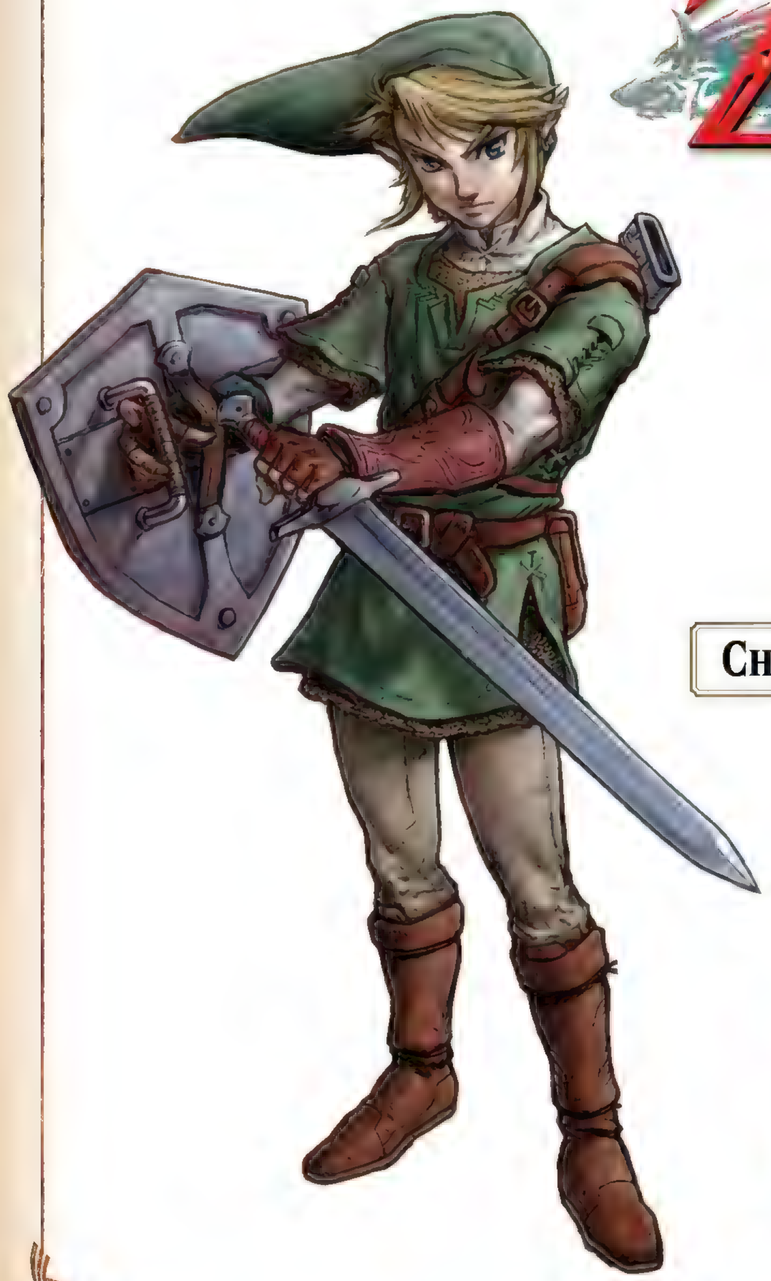
Princess Zelda

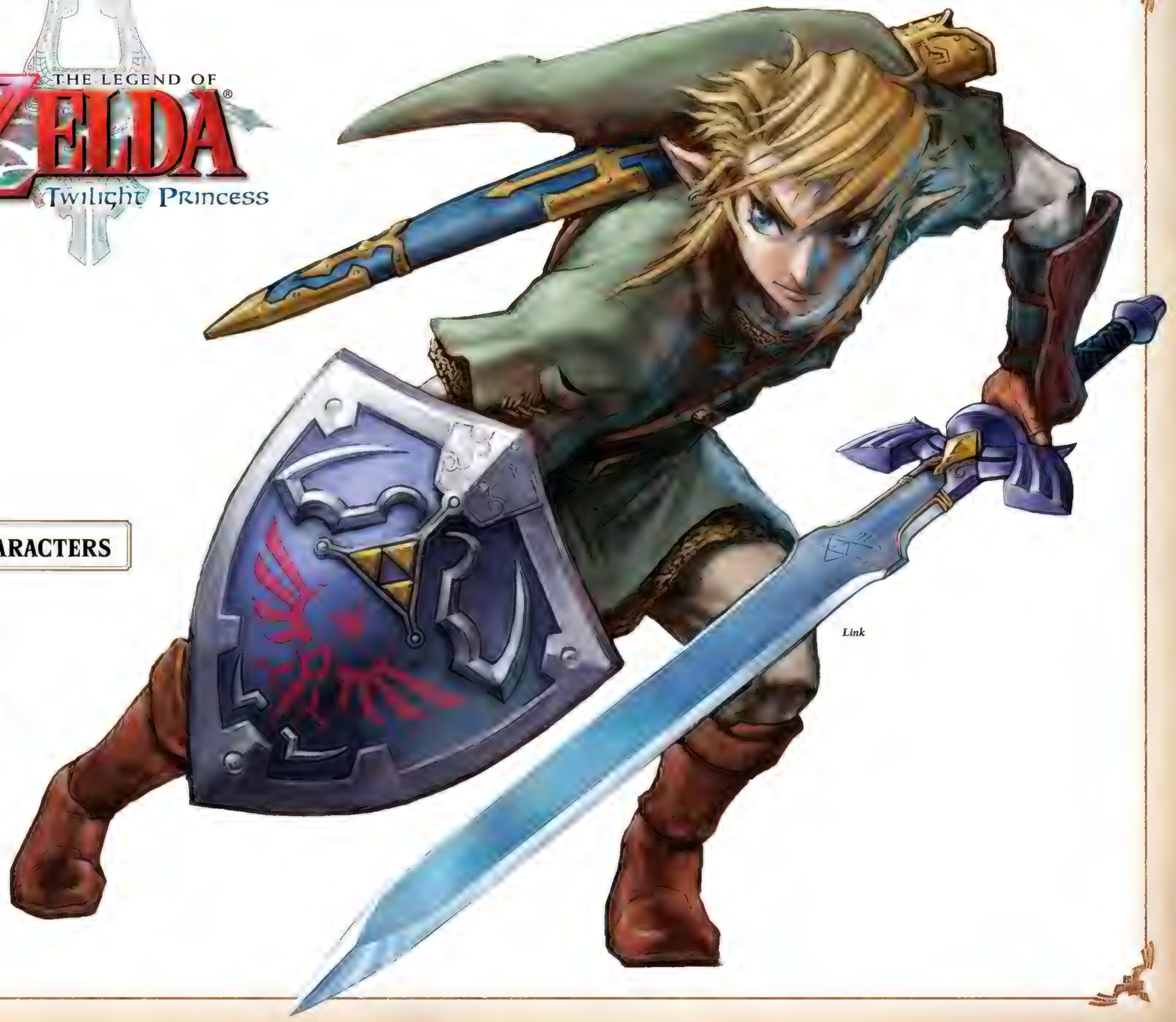
Vaati

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®
Twilight Princess

Characters





Link

Epona

Δ

Midna

Δ

Wolf Link

Δ

Possessed Zelda

Princess Zelda

Δ

Ganondorf

Δ

Ganon

Zant

Δ

Ilia

Bo

Rusl

Malo

Talo

Colin

Beth

Shad

Ashei

Auru

Dr. Borville

Chudley

Telma

Agitha

Renado

Luda

Barnes

Gor Coron

Goron Tribe

Darbus

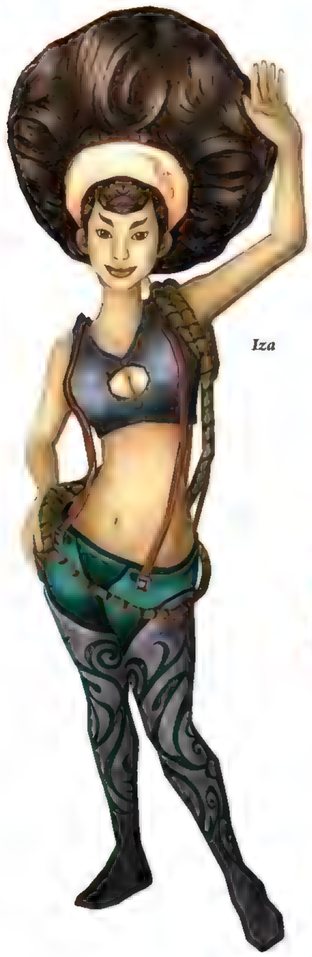
Rutela

Zora Tribe

Ralis

Δ

Great Fairy



Iza

Hena

Yeto

Yeta

Coro

Monkey

Fyer

Falbi

Postman

Sage

Ordona

Eldin

Faron

Lanayru

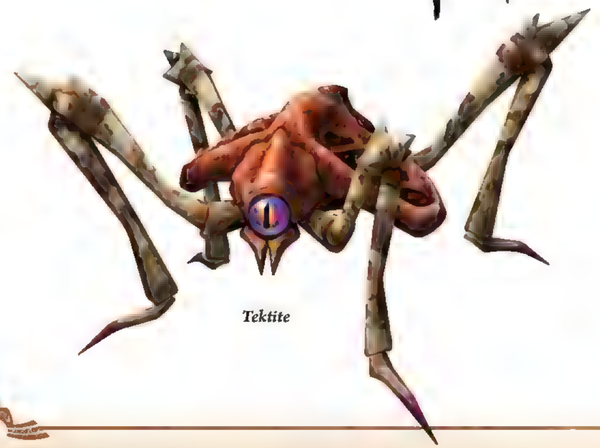
Enemies

Bokoblin

Bulblin

Skulltula

Deku Baba



Tektite

Baba Serpent

Stalfos

Stalhound

Poe

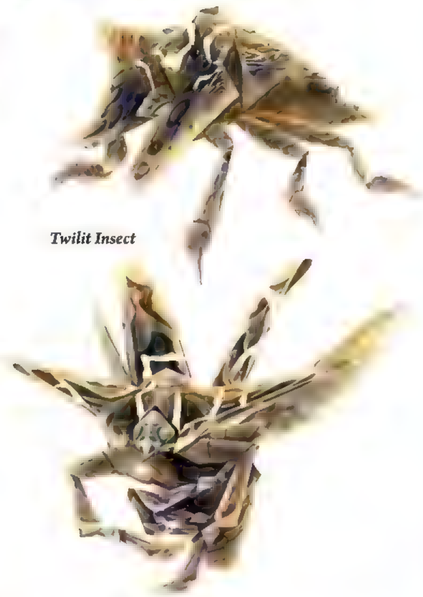
Imp Poe

Lizalfos

Puppet

Twilit Kargarok

Twilit Insect



Twilit Messenger

Ook

Diababa

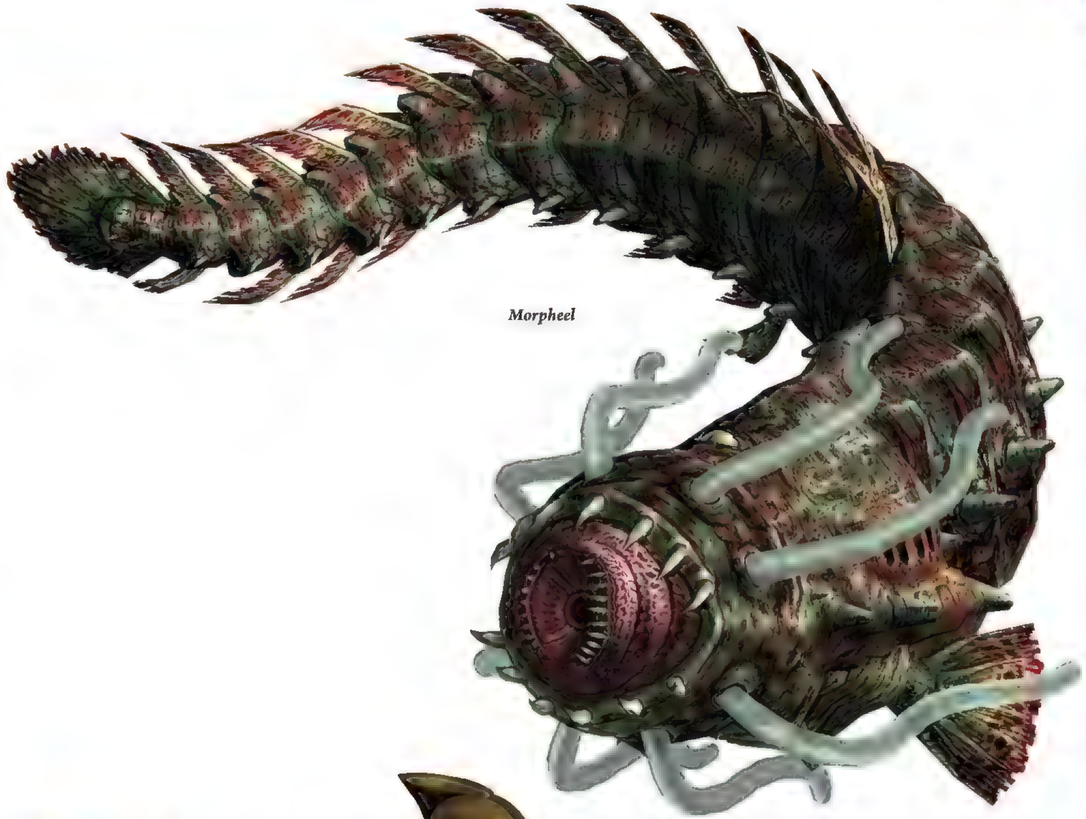
King Bulblin

Lord Bullbo

Dangoro

Fyrus

Twilit Bloat



Morpheel

Deku Toad

Skull Kid

Stallord

Darkhammer

Death Sword

Blizzeta

Darknut

Armogohma

Aeralfos

Argorok

Phantom Zant

Items

LINK'S CROSSBOW TRAINING™

Link

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA®
Phantom Hourglass

CHARACTERS

Tetra

Oshus

Gongoron

Biggoron

Goron Tribe

Phantom

Island Chief

Anouki Tribe

Enemies

Blaaz

Cyclok

Crayk

Cubus Sisters

Dongorongo

Gleeok

Eox

Bellum

Items

Ship Parts

CHARACTERS

Link

Princess Zelda

Phantom

Links

Phantom Zelda

Alfonzo

Spirit Train

Anjean

Gage

Niko

Byrne

Ferrus

Chancellor Cole

Enemies

Demon Train

Dark Train

Cragma

Big Blin

Miniblin

Stamps

Icons

Items

Train Parts

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA™
SKYWARD SWORD

CHARACTERS

Link

Link's Loftwing

Fi

True Master Sword

Hylian Shield

Zelda

Zelda's Loftwing

Impa

Groose

Gaepora

Impa

Ghirahim

Demise

The Imprisoned

Gorko

Remlit

Machi

Scrapper

Parella Tribe

Ledd

Enemies

Bokoblin

Technoblin

Cursed Bokoblin

Moblin

Aracha

Keese

Skulltula

Chuchu

Magma Spume

Octorok

Deku Baba

Pyrup

Staldra

Lizalfos

Stalfos

Stalmaster

Ampilus

Beamos

Scervo

Magmanos

Armos

Earth Guardian

Sky Watcher

Sky Guardian

Moldarach

Levias

Tentalus

Scaldera

Koloktos

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA™
A LINK BETWEEN WORLDS

Link

CHARACTERS

Princess Zelda

Princess Hilda

Sheerow

Blacksmith's Wife

Gulley

Blacksmith

Seres

Oren

Osfala

Irene

Rosso

Impa

Enemies

Shadow Link

Moblin

Ball and Chain Soldier

Ganon

Portraits

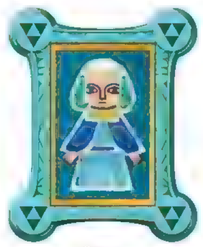
Link

Princess Zelda

Princess Hilda

Irene

Gulley



Seres

Impa

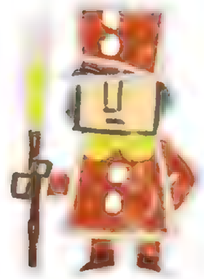
Osfala

Oren

Rosso

Yuga

Hylian Captain



Hylian Soldier

Soldier

Items

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA™
Tri Force Heroes

Characters

Links

Preliminary Sketch

Moblin

Totem Armos

Princess Styla

Lady Maud

King Tuft

Princess Styla

Madame Couture

Madame Couture's Apprentice

Sir Combsly

Communication Icons

Outfits

Items

Temple of Time

The First Thirty Years

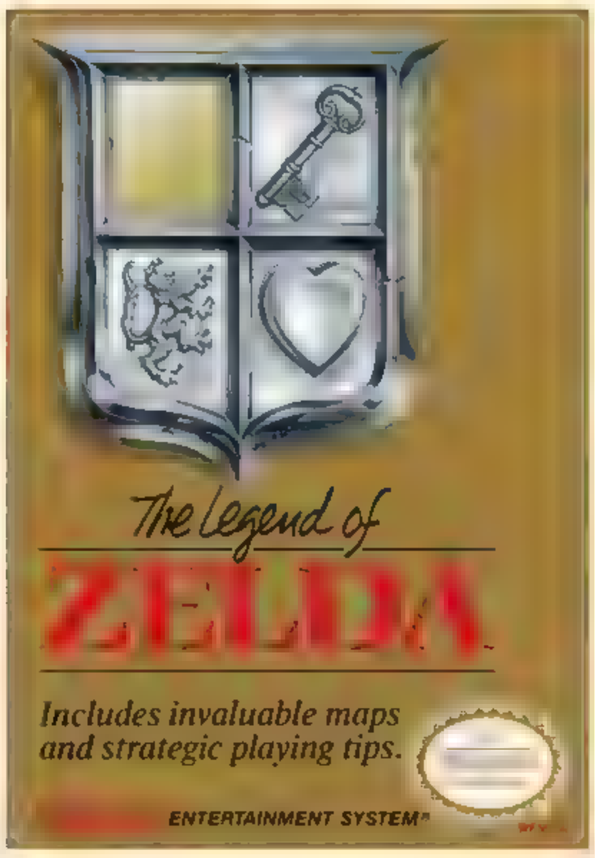
Logo and Package Gallery

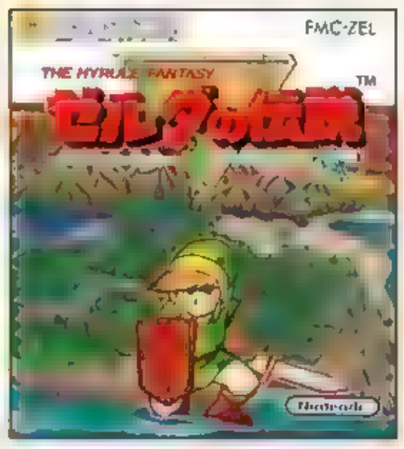
Here are the logos and packages of each of the main-series *Legend of Zelda* titles sold in North America and Japan. The games are presented in the order that they were released in North America.

The Legend of ZELDA

THE HYRULE FANTASY ゼルダの伝説™

THE HYRULE FANTASY ゼルダの伝説® 1



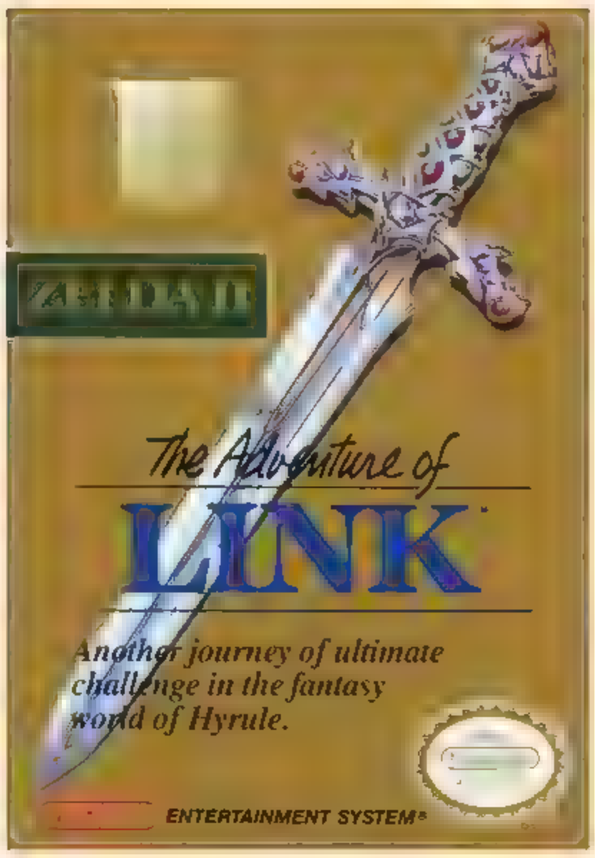


NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: August 22, 1987
Console: Nintendo Entertainment System

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: February 21, 1986 / February 19, 1994
Console: Famicom Disk System / Famicom

The Adventure of LINK

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA 2 ゼルダの冒険®



NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: December 1, 1988
Console: Nintendo Entertainment System

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: January 14, 1987
Console: Famicom Disk System

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: April 13, 1992
Console: Super Nintendo Entertainment System

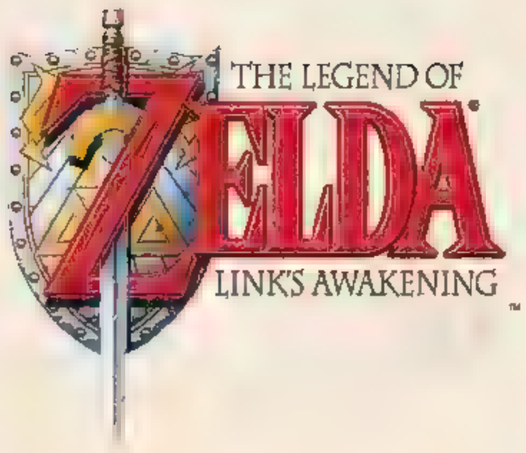
JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: November 21, 1991
Console: Super Famicom

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: August 1993
Console: Game Boy

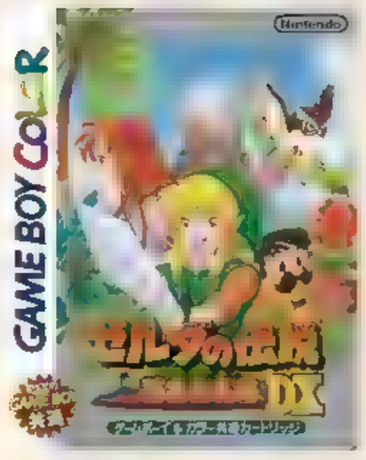
JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: June 6, 1993
Console: Game Boy

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: November 23, 1998
Console: Nintendo 64

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: November 21, 1998
Console: Nintendo 64

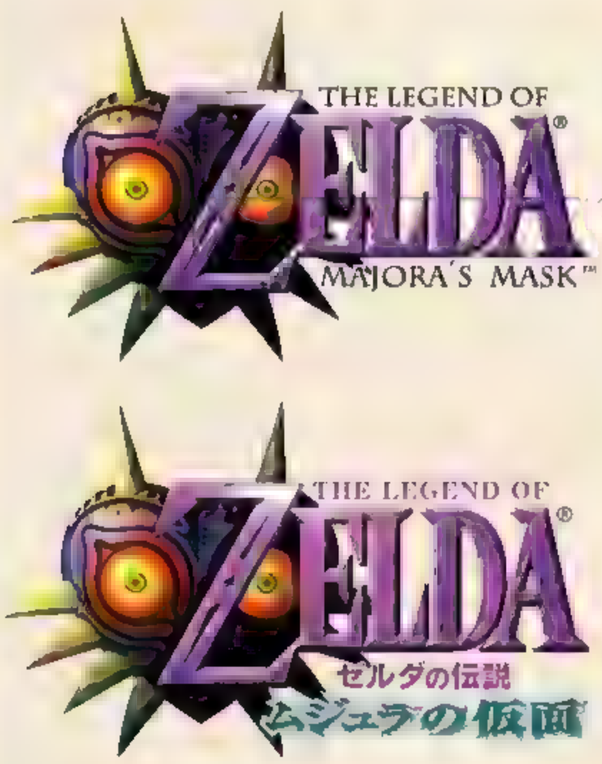


GAME BOY
ゼルダの伝説
夢をみる島 DX



NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: December 15, 1998
Console: Game Boy Color

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: December 12, 1998
Console: Game Boy Color



NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: October 26, 2000
Console: Nintendo 64

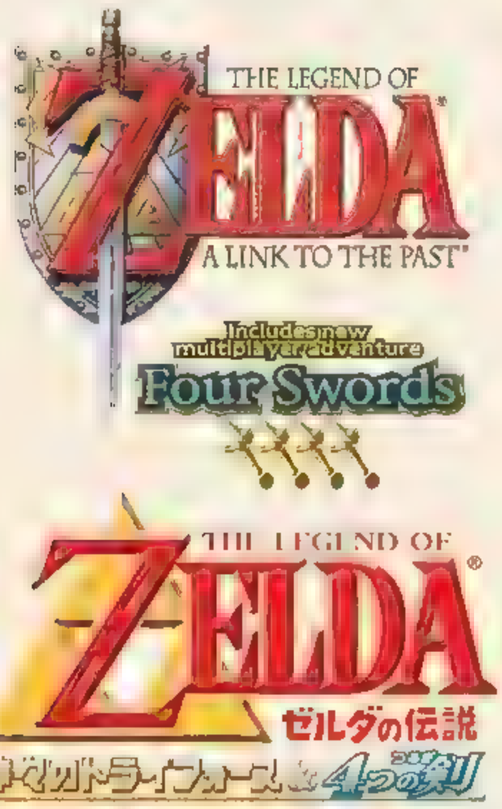
JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: April 27, 2000
Console: Nintendo 64

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: May 14, 2001
Console: Game Boy Color

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: February 27, 2001
Console: Game Boy Color

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: May 14, 2001
Console: Game Boy Color

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: February 27, 2001
Console: Game Boy Color



NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: December 2, 2002
Console: Game Boy Advance

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: March 14, 2003
Console: Game Boy Advance

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: March 24, 2003
Console: Nintendo GameCube

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: December 13, 2002
Console: Nintendo GameCube

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: June 7, 2004
Console: Nintendo GameCube

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: March 18, 2004
Console: Nintendo GameCube

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: January 10, 2005
Console: Game Boy Advance

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: November 4, 2004
Console: Game Boy Advance

ゼルダの伝説 トワイライトプリンセス

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date:
November 19, 2006 (Wii)
December 11, 2006 (GameCube)
Consoles: Wii / GameCube

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: December 2, 2006
Consoles: Wii / GameCube

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA Phantom Hourglass

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: October 1, 2007
Console: Nintendo DS

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: June 23, 2007
Console: Nintendo DS

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA Spirit Tracks

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: December 7, 2009
Console: Nintendo DS

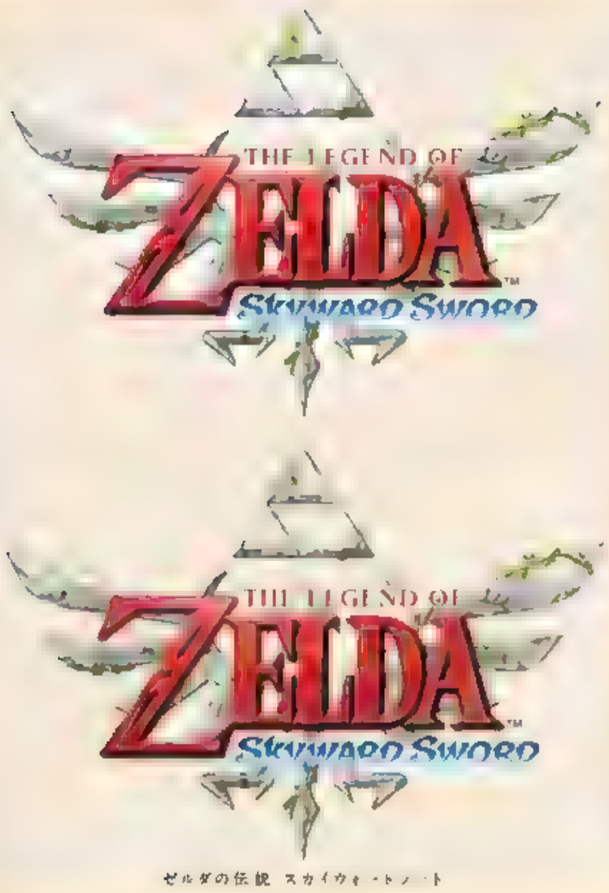
JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: December 23, 2009
Console: Nintendo DS

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA OCARINA OF TIME 3D

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: June 19, 2011
Console: Nintendo 3DS

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: June 16, 2011
Console: Nintendo 3DS

ゼルダの伝説 時のオカリナ 3D



NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: November 20, 2011
Console: Wii

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: November 23, 2011
Console: Wii

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: September 20, 2013
Console: Wii U

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: September 26, 2013
Console: Wii U

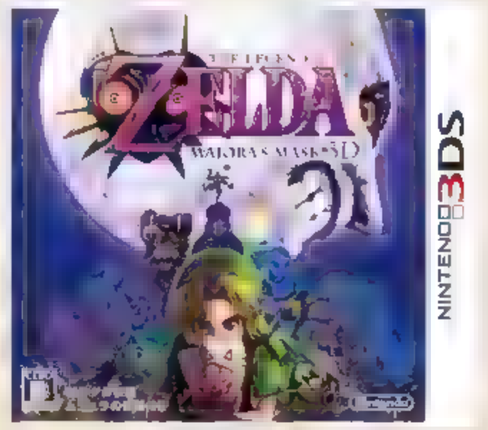
NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: November 22, 2013
Console: Nintendo 3DS

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: December 26, 2013
Console: Nintendo 3DS

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA MAJORA'S MASK 3D

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA MAJORA'S MASK 3D

ゼルダの伝説 ムジュラの仮面 3D



NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: February 13, 2015
Console: Nintendo 3DS

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: February 14, 2015
Console: Nintendo 3DS

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA Tri Force Heroes

ゼルダの伝説 トライフォース3銃士

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: October 23, 2015
Console: Nintendo 3DS

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: October 22, 2015
Console: Nintendo 3DS

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA Twilight Princess HD

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA Twilight Princess HD

ゼルダの伝説 トワイライトプリンセス HD

NORTH AMERICAN EDITION
Release Date: March 4, 2016
Console: Wii U

JAPANESE EDITION
Release Date: March 10, 2016
Console: Wii U

Pixel Art

Characters

LINK

WALKING

PRINCESS ZELDA

OLD MAN OLD WOMAN MERCHANT

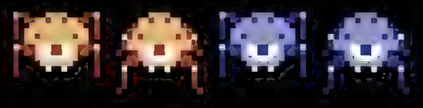
Items

TRIFORCE OF WISDOM
HEART
HEART CONTAINER
SWORD
WHITE SWORD
MAGICAL SWORD
MAGICAL SHIELD
BOW
ARROW
SILVER ARROW
BOMB
MAGICAL ROD
BOOK OF MAGIC
KEY
MAGICAL KEY
BOOMERANG
MAGICAL BOOMERANG
MAP
COMPASS
2ND POTION
LIFE POTION
POWER BRACELET
RECORDER
LETTER
FOOD
RAFT
STEPLADDER
FAIRY
CLOCK
BLUE CANDLE
RED CANDLE
RUPEE
5 RUPEES
BLUE RING
RED RING

ENEMIES

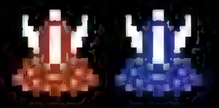
MOBLIN

OCTOROK



TEKTITE

ARMOS



LEEVER

PEAHAT

WALLMASTER

LYNEL

ZORA

ZOL AND GEL

ROPE

VIRE

KEESE

STALFOS

GHINI

GORIYA

WIZZROBE

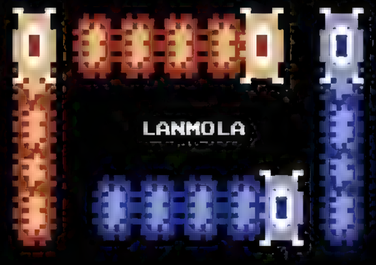
DARKNUT

POLS VOICE

LIKE LIKE

GIBDO

MOLDORM



LANMOLA

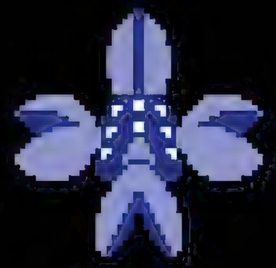
BUBBLE

BOSSES

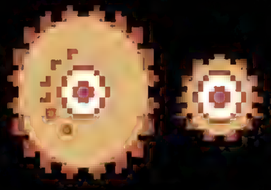
GLEEOK

AQUAMENTUS

DODONGO



MANHANDLA



DIGDOGGER

GLEEOK HEAD

PATRA

GOHMA

GANON

CHARACTERS

LINK

WALKING CROUCHING SLASHING

CROUCHING SLASH

DAMAGE

DOWNWARD THRUST

JUMP THRUST

JUMPING

ITEMS

CANDLE

HAMMER

HANDY GLOVE

RAFT

BOOTS

FLUTE

MAGICAL KEY

CROSS

CHARACTERS

LINK

STATIONARY FALLING

DASH ATTACK

SPIN ATTACK

WALKING

SWIMMING

PRINCESS ZELDA

KING ZORA

THE KING OF HYRULE AND THE SEVEN MAIDENS

SAHASRAHLA

SAHASRAHLA'S FRIEND

FLUTE BOY

FLUTE BOY'S FATHER

LINK'S UNCLE

INFORMANT WOMAN

AVERAGE MIDDLE-AGED MAN

OLD WOMAN

LOST OLD MAN

STREET MERCHANT

RUNNING MAN

SWEEPING LADY

CUCCO

LOYAL SAGE

AGINAH

GREAT FAIRY

VENUS THE FAIRY QUEEN

CURSED FAIRY

LUMBERJACKS

SYRUP

DWARVEN SWORDSMITHS

BUG-CATCHING KID

FRIENDLY PIKKU

DARK WORLD SHOPKEEPERS

BOMB SHOPKEEPER

DIGGING GAME KEEPER

BULLY

BULLY'S FRIEND

STORYTELLING INSECT

STORYTELLING TREE

STORYTELLING OCTOPUS

STORYTELLING BIRD

ENEMIES

SWORD SOLDIER

SPEAR SOLDIER

ARCHER

BOMB SOLDIER

BALL AND CHAIN TROOPER

MINI OCTOROK

OCTOROK

OCTO-BALLOON

TOPPO

CROW

VULTURE

POE

HOARDER

ARMOS

BEE

ZORA

BUZZ BLOB

CUKEMAN

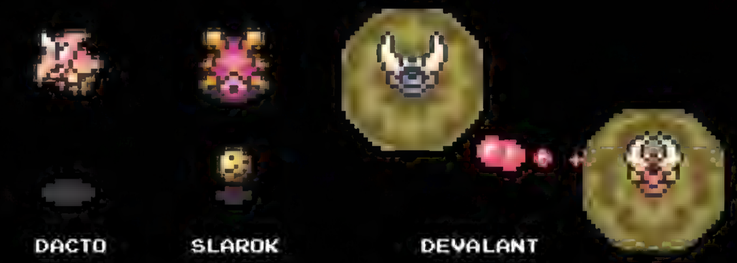
SAND CRAB

DEADROCK

GELDMAN

RAT

ROPE


DACTO
SLAROK
DEVALANT

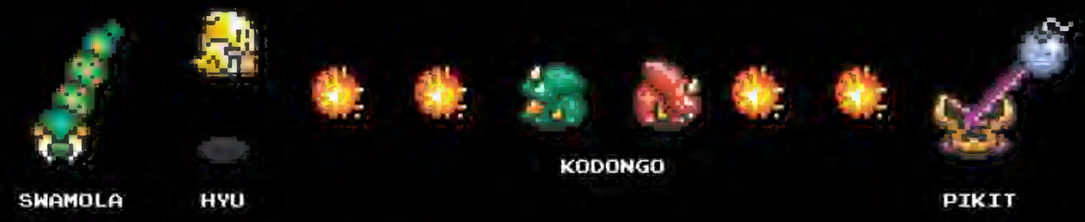
TEKTITE

KEESE
LEEVER
POPO
SLIME

STALFOS

ROPA
SNAP DRAGON
EYEGORE
MOBLIN
TAROS

MINI-MOLDORM
HARDHAT BEETLE
GOLDEN BEE
STAL
KU


SWAMOLA
HYU
KODONGO
PIKIT

PIKKU
BARI
BIRI
TERRORPIN
HELMASAUR

ZIRRO
LYNEL
KYAMERON
FREEZOR
HOKKUBOKKU

GIBDO
DAIRA
GORIYA
SKULLROPE

WATER TEKTITE
GIBO
WALLMASTER
PENGATOR

ZOL
WIZZROBE

BUZZ
BABUSU
ZORO
PIROGUSU
CHAIN CHOMP
SLUGGULA
HINOX
CHASUPA
STALFOS KNIGHT

BOSSES

AGAHNIM

GANON

ITEMS

SHIELDS

BOW AND ARROW

SWORDS

BLUE AND RED MAIL

BOMBS

MAGICAL BOOMERANG

HOOKSHOT

POWER GLOVE

TITAN'S MITT

LANTERN

MOON PEARL

FIRE ROD

ICE ROD

CANE OF SOMARIA

CANE OF BYRNA

MAGIC HAMMER

MAGIC CAPE

MAGIC BOTTLE AND POTIONS

ZORA'S FLIPPERS

PEGASUS SHOES

FLUTE

BUG-CATCHING NET

SHOVEL

MUSHROOM

BOOK OF MUDORA

MAGIC MIRROR

BOMBOS MEDALLION

ETHER MEDALLION

QUAKE MEDALLION

Bonus Gallery

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA SERIES ARTWORK
This *Legend of Zelda* artwork isn't specific to a single title. Rather, it was created to represent the series as a whole.

Link

The Wingcrest

Rupees

The Master Sword and Hylian Shield

The Triforce

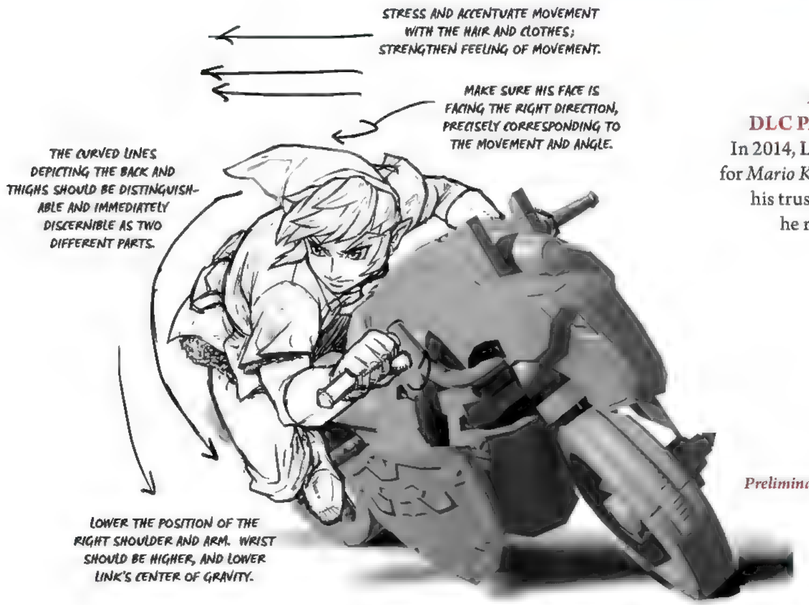
***THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD* TEASER ILLUSTRATION**

This early illustration was shown to the public when *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* was first unveiled at E3 2009. At the time, neither the identity of Fi nor even the game's title had been officially announced.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA 25TH ANNIVERSARY ILLUSTRATION

In 2011, a campaign to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the series' creation took place, kicked off by *The Legend of Zelda* 25th Anniversary Symphony concerts. This commemorative illustration was drawn for the occasion. From the first game right up until *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* (which was, at that time, the latest release), this elaborate piece features a gathering of Links both past and present.

***THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK BETWEEN WORLDS* TEASER ILLUSTRATION**
This illustration was shown to the public at E3 2013. Link's proportions, among other details, differ from those seen in the released game, making him appear more like the Link from *A Link to the Past*, released twenty-two years before.



Preliminary Sketch

***MARIO KART 8* DLC PACK ILLUSTRATION**
In 2014, Link appeared in a DLC pack for *Mario Kart 8* on the Wii U. Instead of his trusty steed, Epona, however, he rode the Master Cycle.

SUMMER GREETING CARD ILLUSTRATION

This illustration was sent out in the summer of 2014 to those who had registered Nintendo Network IDs on the Wii U.
The finalized version of the image depicts Link with Majora's Mask on his head.

***THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS HD* TWITTER ILLUSTRATIONS**

The illustration at bottom right on the opposite page was shared via the official Twitter account at the time of *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess HD*'s 2016 release on the Wii U, as was the series of images on this page. Every day, a new character was added to the series, and on release day, all the main characters were present.

THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA
BREATH OF THE WILD

Link

Bokoblin

Guardian

Encoded in Illustrations

Another Side to *The Legend of Zelda*'s History

Thirty years have passed since the creation of *The Legend of Zelda* in 1986. The enormous number of illustrations produced for each title have played a huge part in expanding the *Legend of Zelda* universe. In accordance with the theme of this book, the following pages feature the voices of four artists who represent the multiple generations of Nintendo designers who produced the over two thousand illustrations contained in this book. These individuals speak about their memories of working on each game and the thought process behind their illustrations.

July 2016
Nintendo Co., Ltd., Headquarters
Kyoto, Japan

I've gathered you here today from Nintendo's Entertainment Planning & Development division to hear the stories behind the artwork and character design for each generation of the* Legend of Zelda *series. My first question is for Nakano-san, Haruhana-san, and Takizawa-san. It wasn't until after the release of* A Link to the Past *on the SNES that you three started at Nintendo, correct?

NAKANO: That's right. We weren't involved with the series' artwork and character design until Nintendo 64's *Ocarina of Time* and the games that followed it.

Were you about high-school age when the original* Zelda *came out in 1986?

TAKIZAWA: I think I might've been the only one of us still in middle school then.

And Wada-san, you didn't join the company until quite a while later, say, around the time of* Spirit Tracks' *release on the Nintendo DS?

WADA: That's right.

So how old were you when the original* The Legend of Zelda *came out?

WADA: It was thirty years ago, so I was three.

Three?!

WADA: Yes, I was born the year that the NES came out. [*laughs*]

I see! So, the first* Zelda *game you were involved with was* Skyward Sword *on the Wii, correct?

WADA: Yes, that's correct.

Today, we'll be going through* The Legend of Zelda*'s artwork in chronological order, so I suspect we might not hear from you until the latter part of the interview, Wada-san. My apologies about the wait.

WADA: Don't worry about it. I'm a *Zelda* fan too, first and foremost, so I'm going to enjoy listening. [*laughs*] Shall we?

JUST LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATIONS IS EXCITING

***The Legend of Zelda* (1986)**
***The Adventure of Link* (1987)**

All right, let's start with* The Legend of Zelda*, released on the NES. Taking a look at the main illustration [page 6], we see Link kneeling at the very center of the image, and the setting for his adventure serving as the backdrop. Does anyone happen to know who was behind this picture?

NAKANO: This dates from before I joined the company, so I'm not one hundred percent certain, but I believe it was done by someone from an outside animation studio. During the NES and SNES eras, artwork was frequently outsourced for components like game packaging and manuals. Even within the company, I think that "send it to the pros" was considered common sense when it came to illustration. Because of this, it was customary for Nintendo's in-house staff to create a rough concept sketch in order to indicate what they were looking for, and then illustrators from an outside firm would polish it into a finished work.

The scenery in this image feels very map-like to me. You can see Death Mountain in the background, as well as something that looks like a dungeon entrance.

NAKANO: By including those details in the illustration, they might have wanted to appeal to consumers with the Overworld.

TAKIZAWA: In the NES era, developers were limited to expressing the worlds of their games via flat planes of pixels. With that in mind, I'm sure that their desire was to tell players, "Actually, *this* is the world you're exploring."

Link's facial features are also hard to convey via pixel art, so the illustrations give more insight into what he's meant to look like.

TAKIZAWA: When you saw pictures like these in the manual and so forth, they were complementing the image in your brain. That was the role art played at the time. In fact, when I was a kid, when I picked up a new game, the first thing I'd do was carefully read the manual, etching visions of the world into my mind's eye, before finally starting to play. That was my roundabout method of gaming. [*laughs*]

HARUHANA: Just looking at the illustrations is exciting.

The next game in the series was* The Adventure of Link*, released one year after the first title.

NAKANO: Link had a sudden growth spurt.

***The game was set in the same world as the original, albeit several years later. So, if Link was around twelve in the first one, that would make him about sixteen in* The Adventure of Link.**

HARUHANA: Sixteen, huh . . . ? [*straight-faced*] He's got some nice hips.

All: [*laughter*]

NAKANO: Link's appearance has always been a little androgynous, and he has some effeminate traits as well. One might say that those are his roots. Perhaps the fact that in that Japanese *A Link to the Past* commercial featuring Scha Dara Parr's *Zelda* rap, the person dressed up as Link was female was also symbolic of that.

HARUHANA: You can see some stitching across the chest of Link's tunic. Seeing it reminded me—I think Miyamoto[1] might consider this stitching to be an important element of Link's design. You see, when I was working on *The Wind Waker,* I was drawing a new version of Link . . .

So, Haruhana-san, you were the one behind the design of the so-called "Toon Link"?

HARUHANA: That's right. When I was creating Toon Link, I needed to figure out which aspects of Link's previous designs to keep, and which to get rid of.

You were trying to make his design as simple as possible, I take it.

HARUHANA: During that process, the stitching was one of the aspects I opted to leave out. When I did, though, Miyamoto came to me multiple times, asking, "You're not going to put the stitching on his chest?"

EVERYONE: Huh . . .

HARUHANA: For Miyamoto, I think that stitching on his design might be a big part of what makes Link Link. However, when you add a lot of details to a design, they end up becoming visual noise. I feel that keeping little details like that in check helped the design come together nicely. So, no matter what Miyamoto said, I laughed and brushed it off.

So no matter how many times Miyamoto asked, you didn't budge, right?

HARUHANA: Yup. [*laughs*]

Anyway, in the first* Zelda *game, Link was wearing a V-neck. So, in that sense, you could say it was a return to his origins.

HARUHANA: Yeah, when you put it that way!

HIS EARS ARE LONG, BUT SO'S HIS NOSE

***A Link to the Past* (1991)**
***Link's Awakening* (1993)**

Continuing on, let's turn the conversation to* A Link to the Past *for the SNES.

HARUHANA: I actually never had an NES at home. As such, I don't have a very strong attachment to *The Legend of Zelda* or *The Adventure of Link,* but *A Link to the Past* is a different matter entirely. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that playing this title was what got me into the world of gaming and set the course of my life.

TAKIZAWA: It's the same for me, in that *A Link to the Past* was what inspired me to try my hand at Nintendo's employment examination. It was truly sensational.

HARUHANA: Before *A Link to the Past,* I was just a little boy playing games without putting much thought into them. It was the title that made me realize, "Wow, games are amazing," and really gave me a sense of their enormous potential.

TAKIZAWA: Playing the game, I thought from the bottom of my heart, "I can't believe that it's possible to make a world like this where you can do anything. Video games sure are amazing!"

HARUHANA: For that reason, when I look at the illustrations for *A Link to the Past,* it brings back the same ripples of excitement I got back then. This is especially true of the action shots of Link that were featured in the manual [pages 136–140], because playing the game meant reading the manual, and reading the manual meant playing the game.

While we're on the topic of* A Link to the Past*'s artwork, the first illustration [pages 16-17] depicts the Master Sword resting in the middle of the forest . . .

WADA: It's an amazing image, isn't it?

Absolutely. Who did this one?

NAKANO: I believe that this piece also dates from the era where illustrations were outsourced to animation studios. Therefore, it may have been created by a background artist.

It certainly does look like it could be the backdrop to an anime.

1. Shigeru Miyamoto. Nintendo company director and Creative Fellow. Creator of a large number of Nintendo's flagship titles, from the *Legend of Zelda* series to *Super Mario* and *Pikmin*. In 2006, he was awarded the title of chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by the government of France. Born in 1952.

NAKANO: It does have that sense to it, doesn't it?

What about* Link's Awakening*, the first game in the series to be released on the Game Boy?

NAKANO: I believe its artwork was also outsourced to an animation studio.

The animation-style art does stay consistent from the first game through to* Link's Awakening*. One could also say the same about Link's physical characteristics. His ears are long, but . . .

TAKIZAWA: So's his nose. [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

HARUHANA: I really like the long nose, but Koizumi[2] went and omitted it in *Ocarina of Time*.

Koizumi really revolutionized Link's character design for* Ocarina of Time*, which began development based on the concept of a "cool-looking Link."

I'LL DO ALL THE ARTWORK

***Ocarina of Time* (1998)**

So, on* Ocarina of Time*, Koizumi created Link's model, Haruhana-san mostly constructed the character models, and Takizawa-san mainly worked on the enemy models.

HARUHANA: Yes, that's right.

Nakano-san was thus left in charge of the artwork, which had previously been outsourced. Why the switch to in-house production?

NAKANO: Back then, 3D graphics had come into the mainstream. Digital art featuring 3D-rendered models had started to be produced within the company for games like *Super Mario 64* and *Mario Kart 64*. This may have been the trigger for the move toward in-house illustrations. At the time, such digitally rendered images were, both technologically and financially, not easy to outsource.

Ah, I see.

NAKANO: That's when talk started about how we'd have no choice but to start doing the artwork ourselves. To this end, we brought in an SGI[3] supercomputer, and desperately struggled to learn how to use the PowerAnimator tool as we created the illustrations for titles like *Mario*.

So, it was out of necessity that you started doing the illustrations in house.

NAKANO: Right. However, when we started work on *Ocarina of Time*, the workflow we'd been using prior to this was also still in place, so we outsourced the art to the usual animation studio. To test the waters, we began by requesting several sketches of Link. Unfortunately, when the director, Koizumi, and I were examining the drawings we received, we felt that there was something about them that didn't quite fit with what we'd had in mind. What we were aiming for was a distinct "uniqueness" and "coolness" that seemed as though it would be well received by foreign players. In order to achieve this, my belief was that the design itself would have to convey something that set it apart from everything else that had come before. That's why I started pushing the idea of doing the digital 3D artwork in house. It was while I was showing rough sketches to Koizumi and the other higher-ups of the day that I tried broaching the subject, asking, "Can I just draw everything myself?"

What was Koizumi's response?

NAKANO: Well, naturally, if I were to receive his blessing, it would mean that once I started, I'd be up to my neck in work. There was also no real precedent for my request. As such, I put a lot of work into my proposal. In the end, it was almost a letdown how quickly he responded, "Sure, why not?"

So, you just picked up a pencil and started churning out illustrations of Link, using no references at all?

NAKANO: No, by that time, we had a polygonal model of Link up and running, so I referred to it as I drew. That being said, the fact that it was an N64 model meant that it was a bit rough.

I see what you mean; the same could be said of the textures back then. Not to mention, the model must have had a low polygon count. Link's facial features were a little fuzzy, too.

TAKIZAWA: Um . . . Nakano-san?

2. Yoshiaki Koizumi. Employed by Nintendo Entertainment Planning & Development. Contributed to the development of a large number of titles, including *Super Mario Galaxy* on the Wii. One of the key people involved in the *Zelda* series, as outlined in this interview. Also the originator of the three-day system that served as the foundation of *Majora's Mask*. Born in 1968.

3. An abbreviation for the American company Silicon Graphics, a developer of industry computers.

NAKANO: Yes?

TAKIZAWA: Are you saying that you didn't see the picture of Link that Koizumi drew back then?

NAKANO: There wasn't any picture.

TAKIZAWA: There was, though! That quick watercolor of Link he did.

NAKANO: Huh . . .

TAKIZAWA: Could it be that he never showed it to you . . . ?

NAKANO: I wonder . . . ? I don't remember seeing it.

TAKIZAWA: Maybe Koizumi wanted you to be free to draw Link according to the vision of Link that you imagined from his model on the screen, without being influenced by his version.

So, what did you end up drawing?

NAKANO: It was this picture [top of page 157]. I created it as a design proposal for Link's facial features, as an attempt to realize Koizumi's desire for a "handsome, cool Link." When it got a thumbs-up, I raised my hand and said, "OK then, I'll do all the art just like this!"

Not just Link, you said you would do all the artwork, right?

NAKANO: That's right.

So when you were illustrating Link, was there an inspiration for the character?

NAKANO: Yes. A rather world-famous Hollywood actor . . .

TAKIZAWA: Huh? You mean *that* actor?

HARUHANA: He is one good-looking guy.

NAKANO: Yeah. At that time, if you were to talk about a really good-looking actor, people immediately thought of this guy. So I recall keeping in mind the point of his nose and that strong-willed look in his eyes when I was drawing.

TAKIZAWA: Actually, I remember Koizumi saying something similar as well. When the watercolor version was being worked on, that actor's name also came up.

NAKANO: Is that so? When I was presenting this piece, I did mention how I incorporated a little bit of that actor, but that tidbit didn't seem to win or lose me any points. In actuality, maybe it was just an unspoken approval of how I "got it" back then. [*laughs*]

WHAT KIND OF GUY IS WORTH DEFEATING?

***Ocarina of Time* (1998)**

So how was Princess Zelda illustrated [page 165]?

NAKANO: Like Link, there was a Princess Zelda model that we used as the starting point for her illustration. Haruhana-san was the one that created the polygon model for her.

How did you come to work on the model of Princess Zelda, Haruhana-san?

HARUHANA: Koizumi was focused on Link in each and every aspect. It got to the point where he wasn't able to handle any other characters, so all other characters were sent to me. And Takizawa-san was the one creating all the enemies. So the work became divided between the three of us in an organic fashion.

In* Ocarina of Time*, when compared to the titles that came before it, Princess Zelda's outfits were very detailed and gorgeous. Did that come about from the back-and-forth exchange of ideas between Haruhana-san and Nakano-san?

HARUHANA: I would make the base model and Nakano-san would expand on it with his illustrations.

NAKANO: There was a program that allowed us to view the polygon model and spin it around. I would use it to refine those areas where the textures were lacking and think about the details that weren't in the model.

HARUHANA: So I wouldn't really call it a back-and-forth. It was more like, "You take it from here . . ." [*laughs*]

NAKANO: Yeah, that sounds about right. [*laughs*]

HARUHANA: And once I was done with Princess Zelda, I had to start on the next job, too.

So, Haruhana-san, I'm told you made over sixty characters?

HARUHANA: Yes. That sounds about right, not that I've ever actually counted . . .

I'm sure all the models created by Haruhana-san were a lot of work, but the job of illustrating them all must have felt like an insurmountable amount of work as well.

NAKANO: Yeah, it was quite a workload. At the time, we had just started using tablets to work on and there was the learning curve of that as well. But once I got used to using

the tablet, it would only take me a half day to a day to create an illustration.

I see. And Takizawa-san made the model for Ganon, since he was in charge of the enemies [pages 168, 170–171]?

TAKIZAWA: That's correct.

Ganon is basically a pig, but the humanoid Ganondorf made his first appearance in* Ocarina of Time. *What was your inspiration when you started designing him?

TAKIZAWA: Well, I started by thinking to myself, "What kind of guy is worth defeating?"

So he couldn't just be incredibly strong?

TAKIZAWA: Right. The enemies you feel the best about defeating are the ones that outclass you in every way, from abilities to experience. He also had to be an appealing character, even though he was the enemy. After a lot of trial and error, I slowly completed his model. Then Nakano-san took that and improved upon it. Come to think of it, of all the illustrations that came from Nakano-san, I had very few comments on this one.

NAKANO: Hardly any, in fact. However . . .

TAKIZAWA: Yeah, I did have one request that I felt strongly about. He initially looked like a brute who had nothing but raw strength. I wanted him to have clever eyes so you knew he was a man of high caliber.

NAKANO: Right.

TAKIZAWA: At that time, I had been at the company for three years, and Nakano-san was three years my senior. I might have been out of line making such a request, but it was the one point I wasn't willing to back down on.

NAKANO: I remember it well, and how tenacious he was about it too. [*laughs*] The first illustration I did for Ganondorf had these wide-open eyes. Not exactly an intelligent look, but more like he might have been a little mad. In the end we arrived at a design that made him look not only more intelligent but also, at the same time, like the epitome of an evil ruler.

TAKIZAWA: He is the final boss, after all! And another thing: the first model I created for Ganondorf had him looking a lot thinner, and his head almost looked bird-like. One of the backstories for Ganondorf referred to him as the "Gerudo King of Thieves," so I imagined him to be lean and not well muscled. I wanted him to move gracefully, like a whip. But when I saw the finished illustration for Ganondorf, it was quite different from how I imagined him to be . . .

NAKANO: Emphasizing muscles more than necessary is just my style. [*laughs*]

YUSUKE NAKANO

Born in 1969 in Hokkaido. Joined the company in 1992. His first work as a designer was the package art for *Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3* for the Game Boy (1994). Artists he respects are Frank Frazetta, Richard Corben, and Sam Kieth. His favorite *Zelda* piece is the twenty-fifth-anniversary illustration.

TAKIZAWA: I guess so! [*laughs*] Then again, it did become the basis of the Ganondorf in *The Wind Waker* and the Ganondorf in *Twilight Princess*. The design you came up with became the foundation for his design in several other titles, so I think it was a good thing.

LET THIS BE OUR CREST

***Ocarina of Time* (1998)**
***Majora's Mask* (2000)**

Also in* Ocarina of Time*, the crest on the Hylian Shield takes its now-familiar form. Who made that?

NAKANO: It was me. In the first title and in *The Adventure of Link*, the pattern on the shield was a cross, and in *A Link to the Past*, it was a Triforce and bird feather pattern. I used that as a base, made it a touch more bird-like, and cleaned it up.

Is there meaning behind the bird motif?

NAKANO: At the time, there were no plans to have that bird have any kind of meaning.

WADA: Huh? Is that true? That's a bit of a shock to me . . .

ALL: [*laughter*]

NAKANO: It was retrofitted for *Skyward Sword*. Birds became deeply connected to the creation story of Hyrule.

At this point, the bird and the Triforce patterns are separate, but they became one later, right?

NAKANO: Yeah, when we were working on *Twilight Princess*, we were asked to design a new symbol to represent the *Legend of Zelda* series. So we discussed the idea of taking the shield's design and making it the crest of the Hyrule Kingdom with the producer, Aonuma,[4] and it was decided.

HARUHANA: There was an official announcement too: "From this day forth, let this be our crest."

ALL: [*laughter*]

NAKANO: So after *Twilight Princess* the crest of Hyrule is used frequently, but it was based on the pattern on the shield from *Ocarina of Time*, which was redesigned for *Twilight Princess*.

After* Ocarina of Time*, the next game on the N64 was* Majora's Mask*. And the shield design changes again.

HARUHANA: I was the one that designed the shield for that game. In *Ocarina of Time*, child Link couldn't equip the Hylian Shield. I could have had him continue to use the Deku Shield in *Majora's Mask*, but it was a new title, so I wanted it to stand out. That's why I designed something new. I thought that if I put a bird on it, it would be reminiscent of the Hylian Shield, but since the world of the game was on the dark side, I decided to design it with a nocturnal bird, which is why I went with an owl motif.

Oh, I see. So below the owl is the Triforce, and is that a bat beneath the Triforce?

HARUHANA: Well . . . you're right. I guess it does look like a bat. And I'm the one that drew it too! [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

Majora's Mask* is pretty dark overall compared to Ocarina of Time. Child Link's expressions changed from one to the other as well, didn't they?

NAKANO: In *Majora's Mask*, we wanted Link to look like a child with a touch of grown-up expressions. In *Ocarina of Time*, he went through some bittersweet experiences as adult Link. After all, *Majora's Mask* does take place right afterward. Right from the development phase, it was decided that *Majora's Mask* was going to have a dark atmosphere, so we wanted his expression to match. So we set out to depict a character that seemed rather mature for a child. We put a lot of shadows on him.

Even on Link's face, the shadows really stand out.

NAKANO: That's partially because of an overseas comic that I was a fan of at the time. But overall, I feel that it came across well in creating a dark and mysterious mood. This is probably the first illustration I created for it [page 45].

At that point, it wasn't called* Majora's Mask *yet; it was tentatively titled "A Side Story," correct?

NAKANO: That's right. The official title hadn't been set yet. I created this illustration for the announcement to be made at the Nintendo-sponsored event Nintendo Space World '99. At

4. Eiji Aonuma. Producer of the *Legend of Zelda* series. Made his debut as the director of *Marvelous: Mōhitotsu no Takarajima* (Marvelous: Another Treasure Island), which was released in 1996 for the SNES but never localized for the North American market. Joined the *Zelda* series for *Ocarina of Time*, where he was put in charge of the monsters and dungeons and, as of *Majora's Mask*, became the codirector of the game, along with Yoshiaki Koizumi. Since then, he has been a central figure in the *Zelda* series. Born in 1963.

that time, I took all the information I had and put it into this piece.

I notice the moon doesn't have a face on it yet.

NAKANO: The design of the moon hadn't been set yet. The same goes for the clock tower in Clock Town, so I drew what I imagined it should look like. Additionally, the staff members wanted me to emphasize the many creepy masks that would appear in the game. The designs for Link's transformations and Skull Kid were more or less set, so I threw all of them into the illustration. Of course, many of the things you see were not in the game but from my imagination.

DISPELLING THE DARK AND RETURNING TO THE LIGHT WORLD

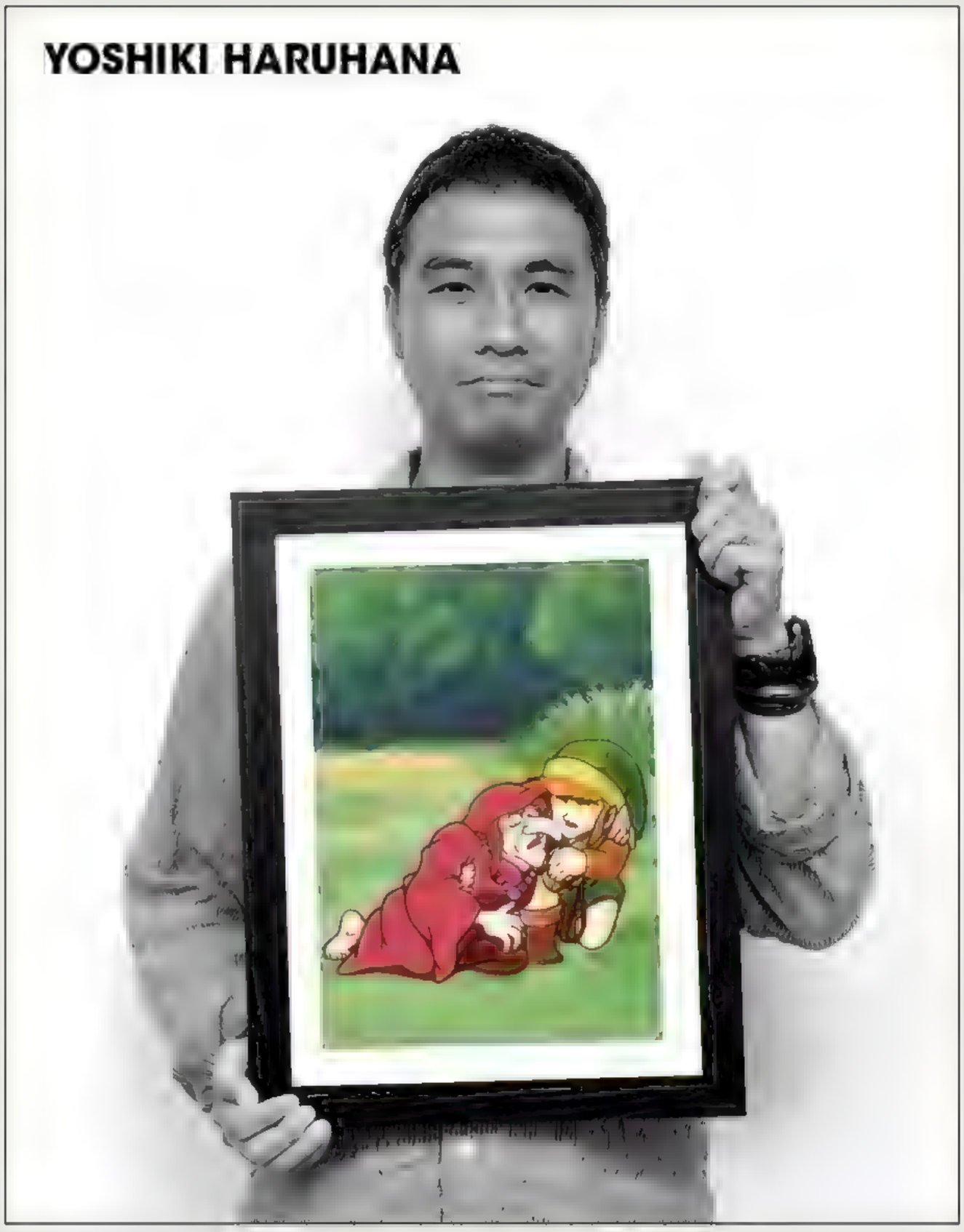
***Oracle of Seasons* (2001)**

Then came* Oracle of Seasons *for the Game Boy Color. This was the first game from the* Zelda *series to be developed outside of Nintendo and that was handled by Capcom.

NAKANO: Yes. And because of that, at the start of the project we frequently traveled to Osaka for meetings with Capcom.

Was there a need to travel to Osaka so often?

NAKANO: It was really important to ensure that we saw eye to eye on the content of the game; otherwise the vision each of us had would begin to shift. By the time I got involved, the pixel art was already finished, so I had them observe my process of coming up with rough sketches based on the pixel art and how that translates into character designs. We discussed it in detail.



Born in 1970 in Osaka. Joined the company in 1994. His first job was working on *Kirby's Dream Course* for the Super Nintendo (1994). Worked on illustrations in the instruction booklet. Artists he respects are Toru Narita, Noriyoshi Ohrai, and Tsubame Kamogawa. His favorite *Zelda* piece is the illustration of Link and Impa from the *Legend of Zelda* instruction booklet.

Even though it was pixel art, I'm sure the person who created it had an idea of what the character should look like, so it must have been important to make sure that the final product matched the image that both sides imagined.

NAKANO: Yes. *Oracle of Seasons* was a game in the style of *Link's Awakening*. So when considering the design for Link, we brought in aspects from the Link in *Link's Awakening* and *A Link to the Past*, but as I mentioned before, there was the issue with the nose . . .

Right. [laughs]

NAKANO: And it was supposed to take place after *Ocarina of Time* as well, so we thought we should update his look a bit. So we made his nose a bit shorter and made his eyes a touch larger . . .

He's wearing white tights too.

NAKANO: Correct. The basis for the design was the Link from *Link's Awakening*, but since it was after *Ocarina of Time* as well we thought it was okay to have him in the white tights. We also made a few anime-like touches and gave the art style a little brighter look. We took this newly redesigned Link to Miyamoto, but he didn't seem to like it very much.

What do you think the reason was?

NAKANO: Maybe the nose wasn't long enough . . . ?

ALL: [*laughter*]

NAKANO: What seems most likely is that Miyamoto still had a strong attachment to the Link from *A Link to the Past*. But it was exactly ten years since the release of *A Link to the Past*, so for me, I felt like it was better for Link to look more in line with the preferences of the customers at the time. I tried really hard to explain this to Miyamoto and he was like, "Fine. Whatever." [*laughs*]

TAKIZAWA: Actually, this art style is pretty popular with the *Zelda* fans. These days, I find that it's often the case that people talk more about the high-definition artwork on a large screen on a home console rather than a portable device, but people still seem to talk about *Oracle of Seasons* often. They say things like "I really like the character design" and such.

NAKANO: I'm happy to hear that. It's one of my personal favorites, and I put a lot of work into it. I learned a lot working on *Majora's Mask* and I felt like I had a good grasp of the characters and knew what I was doing.

Since* Majora's Mask *was so dark, did it feel like you were clearing out the impurities in your body, in a sense?

NAKANO: I guess so. [*laughs*] I have to agree that when I was working on *Majora's Mask*, I was intentionally keeping my mood dark while I worked on the illustrations. But for *Oracle of Seasons*, I felt like I was dispelling the dark and returning to the light world. Additionally, since I was working with Capcom, I wanted to challenge myself and make the artwork look like someone from Capcom created it . . . but that just might have been my competitive spirit coming out! [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

WADA: I have to say the art doesn't quite feel like Nakano-san's work to me. Then again, I think I sense a bit of insanity hiding in his normal art style . . . [*laughs*]

NAKANO: But that's not necessarily the case. I feel that *Oracle of Seasons* is where I discovered the balance between my usual style and doing something new that fits the world of the game, and when I need to differentiate the two.

THE CHARACTERS BEGAN TO MOVE ON THEIR OWN

***The Wind Waker* (2002)**

Then there was the title that had a huge impact on* Zelda *fans,* The Wind Waker *on the Nintendo GameCube. As mentioned before, Haruhana-san was the one that created Toon Link . . .

HARUHANA: Yes. I apologize for the commotion. [*laughs*]

Before we get into how Toon Link came to be, let's talk about the promotional footage from the 2000 event.[5] It featured a realistic Ganondorf and Link fighting each other. That footage was created by Haruhana-san and Takizawa-san, correct?

HARUHANA/TAKIZAWA: Yes.

And everyone who saw that footage believed that the new* Zelda *title coming out for the GameCube would be realistic looking. So tell us: what happened?

HARUHANA: Well, as we created that footage, we came to the realization that the realistic route wasn't the way to go.

TAKIZAWA: [*nods deeply*]

So it was creating that footage that made you realize the realistic route wasn't the right course?

5. *Legend of Zelda* footage shown as part of the technical demo for the GameCube new-product announcement held a day before the Nintendo-sponsored event Space World 2000 (August 24, 2000).

HARUHANA: That's right. We were asking ourselves, "Is this the right direction to go?" and "Does realistic equal a good game?" At the time, as the console's hardware specs went up, many games were heading in a more photorealistic direction.

They were.

HARUHANA: And, at that time, when I was flipping through a game mag, all I saw were really similar-looking games, and I began to worry we would be making one of them. So we thought about what we needed to do with our art to make it stand out. How could we make the readers of that magazine stop and look at our project? We decided that making a realistic Ganondorf and Link wasn't it . . .

So you felt that a realistic-looking* Zelda *would be lost in the sea of many other games?

HARUHANA: Right. So we cleared our heads of everything and thought about all the other games in the *Zelda* series. Toon Link came out of that process.

As mentioned before, it was such a simple design that even the stitching was removed. Why did you go to such lengths to simplify the design?

HARUHANA: One of the very *Zelda*-specific things you do in the games is destroy a wall with a bomb. But as the walls become more and more detailed, it becomes harder to spot which walls can be destroyed. So we decided to simplify not only Link, but the overall design as well.

And by doing so, you felt that the player could easily enjoy the basic fun of a* Zelda *game.

HARUHANA: Yes.

So you created the simplified sketch of Link first and that got Takizawa-san started.

TAKIZAWA: Like a switch was flipped. [*laughs*]

What was your first impression when you saw the new Link?

TAKIZAWA: It wasn't something I had in my own wheelhouse, so I was, frankly, shocked. But at the same time I saw it as a worthwhile challenge. In any event, I thought it looked easy to make move. You know how writers and manga artists say, "The characters began to move on their own" . . . ?

Yes.

TAKIZAWA: When I saw Haruhana-san's sketch, I felt possibilities begin to stir within myself. All of these images and ideas began to well up inside me. "If Link looks like this, then the enemies would look like this . . ." and it went from there.

And that's when Takizawa-san drew the Moblin?[6]

TAKIZAWA: That's right.

USED CELLOPHANE TAPE TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A WOODBLOCK PRINT

***The Wind Waker* (2002)**

***A Link to the Past & Four Swords* (2003)**

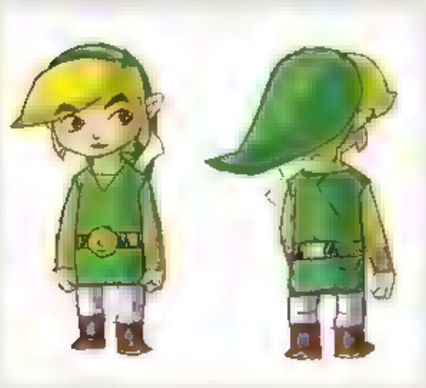
And so Toon Link was born. I believe that is when you started on the artwork, Nakano-san. What was your first impression of the design?

NAKANO: It was a big shock. I said, "So this is the direction you're taking?" It seemed like a great challenge, and I felt like I had a fire lit under me. The artwork would be so different from everything I'd done before, and I wanted Haruhana-san to say, "Nakano-san really gets it."

That's when you created the Link that looks sort of like he was made from cut pieces of paper [pages 218–224].

NAKANO: That's right. I used the texture of *washi*, which is a style of Japanese paper, as a base, and altered the color sections so that the paper texture wasn't lost. As Takizawa-san said earlier, "The characters began to move on their own." The character designs looked easy to animate. I worked hard to figure out a way to make the still image move as elegantly and as boldly as we needed.

Of the many pieces of art created for* The Wind Waker, *one of the most



6. Link illustrated by Haruhana and Moblin illustrated by Takizawa.

Born in 1972 in Nagano. Joined the company in 1995. His first work was *Yoshi's Island* for the Super Nintendo (1995). Created the pixel art for the international version. The artists he respects are "too hard to pick only a few. [*laughs*] I have so many, ranging from famous artists to friends and family and even my senior and junior colleagues. I'm constantly being influenced by them." Favorite *Zelda* piece is the illustration of the three goddesses from *A Link to the Past*.

memorable was the woodblock print style that was used for the opening [page 62].

NAKANO: I was the one who worked on that. Aonuma had come to me out of the blue and asked, "Can you create something we can use for the demo in a short amount of time?" When I asked, "How much time do I have?" the answer was, "Maybe a week or two." Then he says, "I'll leave the style to you."

That's a pretty crazy request. [laughs]

NAKANO: I did the woodblock style as an experiment. The first thing I did was the battle between Ganon and Link. When I showed it to him, he said, "I like it!" so I ended up doing the others in the same manner.

How did you create the woodblock-style artwork?

NAKANO: I first created the rough concept in Photoshop,[7] printed it out onto paper, and then used cellophane tape to peel away the toner to make it look like a woodblock print.

So the reason it looks like a woodblock print is because you used cellophane tape?

NAKANO: That's correct. Then I scanned the artwork back into Photoshop and placed the *washi* texture on top of it and blended it. By combining this analog method with the digital image I created, I was able to make the artwork look like a woodblock print.

Then there was the stained glass illustration, which was very memorable.

NAKANO: That piece was illustrated by the manga artist Akira Himekawa-san.[8] If I recall, it was a request from overseas. They had asked for a piece with a slightly different hair color and a background. We had a previous relationship with Himekawa-san from the *Zelda* manga series, so by having this piece done, I feel that the overall look of the series was expanded, and it worked out really well.

A year after the release of* The Wind Waker, *A Link to the Past &

7. Digital creation and editing software produced by Adobe Systems.

8. Manga artist team consisting of A. Honda and S. Nagano. They've worked on the *Legend of Zelda* manga for Shogakukan since 1999 with their adaptation of *Ocarina of Time*. Since then, they've released eleven volumes, the latest of which is *Twilight Princess*.

Four Swords ***was released on the Game Boy Advance. As of this title, the Toon Link character created by Haruhana-san became the main character for the portable video game releases.***

HARUHANA: I guess so. By going with a Link with such large eyes, we were able to expand the level of artistic expression we can have in the *Zelda* series.

The bigger eyes are well suited to the smaller screens on the portable game units.

HARUHANA: That was a fortunate turn of events for us. By the way, some people say that Toon Link was the turning point for the *Zelda* series, but for me, I think that was *Ocarina of Time*. That's what changed the franchise.

So you're saying **Ocarina of Time** ***was the first watershed moment?***

HARUHANA: That's right. The games for the N64 went from pixel art to polygons, so the graphics in the games became something different, requiring us to learn a new way to express the artwork. And in that time, going from *The Legend of Zelda* to *Ocarina of Time* was a natural progression. But *Zelda* has, since the days of the NES and the SNES, had a naive sensibility about it.

Link used to be more of a rambunctious young boy.

HARUHANA: I think that in a manner of speaking, the games themselves were idyllic and didn't take themselves too seriously, and I mean that in a good way. When *Ocarina of Time* came out, the pendulum swung the other way, and I wouldn't say that it swung back completely with *The Wind Waker,* but I feel that's when the direction for *Zelda* started to revert. That might be going a bit far. I feel as if *Zelda* is once again heading for a change.

And so the fact that Toon Link was born to take part in **The Wind Waker** ***and in the new portable games is a sign that the level of artistic expression for the*** **Zelda** ***series has expanded, and there's value in that in and of itself?***

HARUHANA: I'd like to think so.

LET'S DO THIS THING!

Twilight Princess **(2006)**

Four years after the release of **The Wind Waker, Twilight Princess** ***was released on the GameCube and Wii. In this title, Link is once again realistic looking. The pendulum has swung back. What happened in the interim?***

TAKIZAWA: Actually, we were starting to plan *Wind Waker 2,* but requests were coming in for a title more like *Ocarina of Time*. I personally felt that *The Wind Waker* was such a critical hit that we'd done everything we could with it already.

HARUHANA: I think we did.

TAKIZAWA: And the proposed setting for *Wind Waker 2* was not on the sea, but on land. The desire to depict Toon Link on a horse riding around the great plains was great; however, with his small stature and short arms and legs, it would have been difficult to make him look good on a horse. It wasn't like we could create an adult version of Toon Link. And that was about the time we heard that people were wanting a realistic-looking *Zelda* game again. Also at the time, there was an epic fantasy movie which was very popular. So after reexamining the situation, we said to ourselves, "Let's do this thing!" I was brought on as the art director, and the first thing I did was ask Nakano-san to start on the new design for Link.

So Nakano-san's new Link design is where this project started?

TAKIZAWA: Determining the look and feel of the title with a computer model or rough sketch from another artist had, up to that point, been one of the first steps. Having Nakano-san come onboard so early was a first for the series.

NAKANO: That's true. For a *Zelda* title created internally, it was a first for me.

For **Ocarina of Time,** ***you had polygon models to work from, and for*** **The Wind Waker,** ***you had the sketch by Haruhana-san. So why did you decide to have Nakano-san do the initial artwork for Link?***

TAKIZAWA: The answer is simple. In order for the project to match the scope we wanted, we needed to collaborate with external artists to move forward and not just our internal designers. For that to work, we needed detailed sketches for the early stages of development. That's why I wanted to have Nakano-san onboard from the start.

And this is the first piece of art you released as a part of your announcement [page 75]?

NAKANO: That's right. I believe it was shown at E3. This one was the standing pose [page 266] and also this one [page 269].

The amount of detail is amazing.

NAKANO: Yeah. It took me a long time to complete it. About ten times as long as it took me to do a piece for *The Wind Waker.*

I can even see that he has chain mail on underneath his usual green clothes.

NAKANO: I wanted to make sure that I got across all of the separate pieces and how they fit together.

What drove you to go that far?

NAKANO: As Takizawa-san said, I heard that many fans, especially those in North America, wanted a realistic-looking *Zelda* game. And if so many people were asking, it was the least I could do . . .

Another fire was lit, and you were inspired by the challenge?

NAKANO: Yes! [*laughs*] So in the end, I wanted Link to look realistic, so I put in details to make him look dusty and a bit dirty, along with other little touches. I really wanted to give Link a new look.

A SQUARE-JAWED, BURLY-LOOKING LINK TOO

***Twilight Princess* (2006)**

So at that point, the story hadn't been set yet, but you needed to design the face for the new Link. What things did you keep in mind as you worked?

NAKANO: For the face, I talked at length with Takizawa-san as I started to sketch. I wanted him to be a little bit older. The Link up till now had been in his teens, but for this one we were talking about making him around twenty-five . . . maybe even thirty.

TAKIZAWA: Meaning it was an adventure that an adult Link was taking on.

NAKANO: He would be well built . . . A skinny man with a pretty face wouldn't stand a chance against a large enemy, so we thought about making him quite sturdy. So the first illustrations were, in a way, pretty amazing.

TAKIZAWA: They certainly were. There was even a square-jawed, burly-looking Link too. [*laughs*]

NAKANO: When I showed the sketches to the overseas staff, the response I got back was, "What the fans want is the Link they saw in *Ocarina of Time.*" So in the end, his face and body type were made similar to that of the adult Link from that game.

One of the most notable aspects of* Twilight Princess *is that Link can transform into a wolf.

NAKANO: Yeah, so I made sure that the look of his eyes matched the eyes of Link as a wolf.

TAKIZAWA: But the detail about him changing into a wolf came after the initial designs. So the sketches of Link later on had him looking much more wolf-like and wilder. At one point, there was talk about giving him a Japanese haircut style called a wolf cut, which would have given him a more wolfish look.

NAKANO: I remember that. But the sketches I made for the front, back, and side views didn't make him look very wild . . .

Let's move on to Link's sidekick Midna. She had a very unique design.

It seemed like she was wearing Jōmon-period pottery on her head [pages 272–273].

NAKANO: At the time, when I was thinking up a design for the character, I wanted to search through some image sources not typically used in games. So I searched in various places and eventually ended up looking at bronze artifacts from the Shang dynasty. I felt like I could feel life within them, and their shape and form were really interesting.

It's certainly something you're not likely to forget. For that matter, neither is the design for Zant [page 279].

NAKANO: Far be it from me to say, but the design I like best is the one for Zant.

And how did your favorite come to be?

NAKANO: I came up with the design on the bullet train.

I guess you were on it for a business trip or something?

NAKANO: When you're seated for an extended period of time, you get bored. So I start to sketch. I first clear my mind and start to draw whatever comes to mind. At one point, I was drawing shapes that made me think of Southeast Asia. I made that shape into the head, added hands and feet, and when I started to clean up the character, there was Zant.

So the image of Zant just came to you from the sky?

NAKANO: I suppose so. Instead of having a destination in mind, letting the subconscious move my pen to come up with doodles is the way I often get ideas that I can use.

TAKIZAWA: Being the art director, even though Nakano-san is my senior, if he comes to me with something I don't like, I have to tell him to do it over. But in the case of Zant, I approved the design immediately.

NAKANO: Ooccoo, the human-faced bird lady,[9] was an instant approval as well.

TAKIZAWA: You were doodling her on your notebook during a meeting and I said, "Can I have her?"

NAKANO: So it was an instant approval. [*laughs*]

TAKIZAWA: I guess you're right. [*laughs*]

PUT EVERYTHING I HAVE INTO IT

***Twilight Princess* (2006)**
***Phantom Hourglass* (2007)**
***Spirit Tracks* (2009)**

Looking at the artwork for* Twilight Princess*, Nakano-san, I can feel the tremendous energy you put into it. What drove you that hard?

NAKANO: Being able to be involved from the beginning with the character designs allowed me to put more of myself into the title and made my attachment to it that much stronger. And furthermore, it had that art style that was closest to the realistic fantasy art from overseas that has influenced me over the years. So I was able to put everything I have into it.

I see.

TAKIZAWA: In 2016 we did a remake of this game and called it *Twilight Princess HD*. We needed to create some new artwork for its release. I was placed in charge of overseeing this work, and Nakano-san comes to me and says, "I want to draw some more."

NAKANO: I was already in a managerial role and had very few opportunities to draw. But since it was a remake of *Twilight Princess*, I almost had to insist. [*laughs*]

TAKIZAWA: He was so excited about working on it that I said, and it just slipped out, "Aren't you going too far, Nakano-san?" [*laughs*]

NAKANO: This isn't an excuse, but when I came up with two rough designs for the main visuals and asked the company to choose which one they wanted, they were split down the middle. Since they couldn't make up their minds, I said that I would do both.

So is that why Takizawa-san said you were going too far? [*laughs*] So which pieces were they?

NAKANO: This one [page 81] and this one [pages 82–83]. Normally you'd only need to create one piece and the teams would all use that one piece, but this time, each team sort of had specific needs, so I ended up fulfilling the needs of the teams and, as a result, doubling my work.

But it's not like you did it begrudgingly, right?

NAKANO: No, I did it happily. [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

TAKIZAWA: And once I was told we needed two pieces, I needed to see it through.

NAKANO: [*Quite happily*] That's right. [*laughs*]

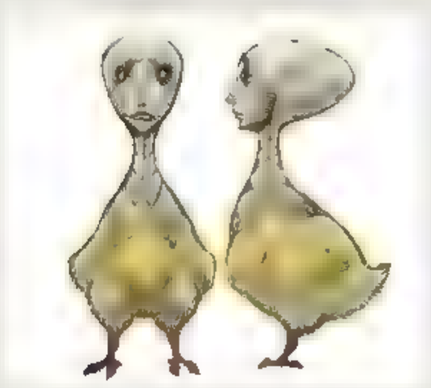
***Next up is the first* Zelda *title for Nintendo DS,* Phantom Hourglass.**

HARUHANA: It was similar to *The Wind Waker*. It wasn't my intention originally, but we had learned that Toon Link was well suited to the portable game systems, so the grouping of the teams came about naturally. The realistic Link was for the home consoles and Toon Link was for the portable systems.

That's how things are now, but in the future Toon Link could appear on the home console again?

HARUHANA: That's true. It's not like we drew a line in the sand.

So in the opening of* Phantom Hourglass *there is a picture play [page 86]. Who worked on that?



9. Ooccoo.

NAKANO: A woman on my staff did it.

Since there was a woodblock print style in* The Wind Waker*, I guess that paved the way for something like this to come along as well.

NAKANO: I suppose so.

TAKIZAWA: Revealing a bit of what goes on behind the scenes during development, the creation of the demo movie is a lot of work. But since we needed to advance the story several times during the course of the game, it was decided to make all of the cut scenes in the style of a picture play. That's where Nakano-san's team comes in.

NAKANO: Right. Because I had worked on the woodblock print opening for *The Wind Waker*, whenever there's an opening movie to be made, they bring it to my team.

But the creation of the opening movie is a job for the development team—don't you ever want to tell them that?

NAKANO: Oh no, I enjoy drawing too much. [*laughs*]

HARUHANA: For my sake, I was happy that the job of creating the picture play had gone away. [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

Then came* Spirit Tracks*. For this title, Haruhana-san, the creator of Toon Link, was only backup support. [*laughs*]

HARUHANA: Leaving behind Toon Link like a parting gift for the next generation. [*laughs*] The people who led the designs on this project were the art director of *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* for the 3DS, Koji Takahashi, and the art director of *Splatoon*, Seita Inoue. During the production of *Spirit Tracks*, Inoue's proficiency was amazing.

TAKIZAWA: He drew a ton of sketches.

HARUHANA: He was originally in charge of the menu screens, but he was involved in the designs of the trains and areas around the main dungeons as well.[10]

Looking at some of the rough sketches, they might have worked in* Splatoon *as well.

HARUHANA: Quite possibly.

CREATE APPEALING ART WHILE MAINTAINING UNIVERSALITY

***Skyward Sword* (2011)**

***Thank you for waiting, Wada-san. We've finally come to* Skyward Sword.**

WADA: Oh no, it felt like an instant.

So how did you come to be in charge of the artwork for* Skyward Sword*?

WADA: The decision of who would be in charge of the artwork for *Skyward Sword* was decided by a competition among the group. At that time I had only been at the company for two years, so it was an honor to be chosen.

Why didn't you take on the role, Nakano-san?

NAKANO: As I said earlier, I had to consider my position in the company, and frankly, I was hoping for the younger staff to be more central in the process. That's how the competition came about and Wada-san was chosen.

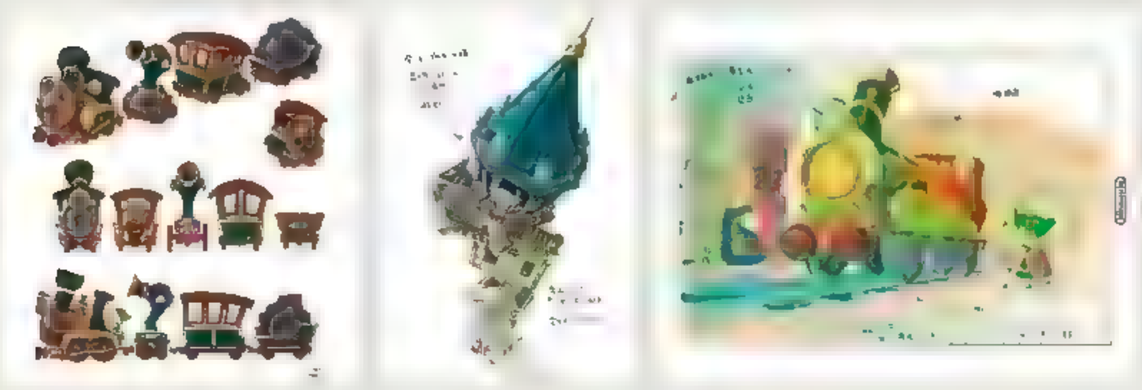
Before the announcement of* Skyward Sword*, there was a piece of art that was revealed [page 396]. Did Wada-san work on that piece?

NAKANO: Actually, I drew that. When I created it, many of the game's story aspects weren't locked down yet, but we needed it for the preview at E3 in 2009.

I see Fi featured in front.

NAKANO: The design for Fi was also a competition. I participated in that, and my design ended up being picked.

It kind of reminds me of the Great Fairy from* The Wind Waker *[page 233]. Is there a reason behind that?



10. Rough sketches by Inoue.

NAKANO: Actually . . . there isn't any.

ALL: [*laughter*]

NAKANO: Fi is an embodiment of the sword, so I wanted to give her a metallic feel.

TAKIZAWA: And as a result, they looked similar. [*laughs*]

NAKANO: I mean, it was in the back of my head. Thinking, "Wasn't there a character with metallic features before?" [*laughs*] But I thought the fans might appreciate the implications of what her metallic features might mean.

And so, after that point, Wada-san started on the artwork. What was on your mind then?

WADA: The first thing I did was look over all the work that Nakano-san had done. I thought, "Wow, that's amazing." I felt that it had a universal appeal to it.

Like anyone looking at it during any era would find it appealing because it's unaffected by trends?

WADA: That's right. Which is why when I look at Nakano-san's art, it doesn't feel old at all. So when I started working on *Skyward Sword*, I thought long and hard about how to create appealing art while maintaining universality.

So with that in mind, what was the first piece you created?

WADA: The first piece I created [page 328] was revealed at E3 in 2010. Because of the tight schedule, I didn't have time to come up with rough concepts on my own, so Nakano-san and I worked together discussing the layout and what poses would be good, and in the end I finished the design we came up with. ***It looks like a watercolor illustration.***

WADA: It had been decided that the game would have a watercolor look, but due to hardware limitations, it wasn't realized as well as we had hoped. So we wanted the illustration to get across how the watercolor styling was supposed to look. At the same time I wanted the slightly oppressive feel that *Twilight Princess* had as well.

Is that why the ink seems blurred together?

WADA: Yeah. Had I illustrated it normally, it wouldn't have taken as much time, but I used Photoshop to make it look like it was created with watercolors. I had difficulty finding the right balance of what to paint in detail and what not to. I didn't want it to lose that watercolor feel.

What other things did you do to give this art a sense of universality?

WADA: When you use a trendy drawing style in your work, you look back on it later and can feel the age of the illustration. So I wanted to avoid that. But using an older style doesn't mean it can't feel nostalgic, which I think is a good thing. So I personally think using the watercolor style was a good thing.

HAS A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING, WHICH KEEPS IT INTERESTING

***Skyward Sword* (2011)**

***A Link Between Worlds* (2013)**

***Tri Force Heroes* (2015)**

Link in* Skyward Sword *had very muscular-looking legs and hips.

WADA: Yes. Link up to that point had very sleek and smart features, but the pants that Link is wearing in *Skyward Sword* are rather baggy compared to previous versions. You can feel a wild strength coming from him. We wanted a contrast to how sleek he looked previously, so we gave him loose-fitting pants.

When drawing Link's face, what parts did you pay close attention to?

WADA: Well, here's one particular detail. Nakano-san used to say to me, "Make sure he has lower lashes!" so I made sure I paid attention to that detail. [*laughs*] I came to understand that the Link drawn by Nakano-san has very detailed lower eyelashes . . .

I'm sure you've created many illustrations, but among them, which one is the most memorable for you?

WADA: That would be this one [page 330]. The reason is that this is the one that Nakano-san first looked at me face to face and complimented me on. And that made me really happy. [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

WADA: He said that the way Link is standing and thrusting his right arm forward is really great.

NAKANO: It's actually pretty difficult to depict the arm and hand being thrust forward like that . . .

Even an amateur looking at it can feel the power emanating from it.

HARUHANA: I like everything about this piece.

TAKIZAWA: It is definitely very cool.

NAKANO: You can really feel the weight of his feet digging in . . .

TAKIZAWA: It might become a tradition passed down from the Official Zelda Art Masters to the next generation. Both Nakano-san and Wada-san love creating pieces with complex poses . . . [*laughs*]

WADA: Yeah . . .

NAKANO: You might be right. [*laughs*]

By the way, Wada-san. How did it feel to be in charge of the artwork that* Zelda *fans worldwide had been looking forward to?

WADA: I certainly felt the pressure. But if anything, that made me really happy.

Normally it's not a task that would be given to a second-year employee, right?

WADA: Which is why I kept on asking, "Are you sure I should be doing this?" the whole time I was working on the artwork. It didn't feel real to me. I was enjoying myself instead of feeling the pressure.

***Next up is the sequel to* A Link to the Past, A Link Between Worlds.**

HARUHANA: For this title there was a difference of opinion on which Link to use. Since it was for the Nintendo 3DS, some felt that it should be Toon Link, since it's a title for a portable game system, but others said that this was a sequel to *A Link to the Past,* so it should be regular Link. We had a long debate over it.

The people who played the first game on the SNES may have had an issue if the main character was Toon Link . . .

HARUHANA: Exactly. Since *A Link to the Past* was the original, it only made sense to go in that direction. And since it's been twenty-two years since the previous title, the expectation about the art style became what it is. I found myself thinking that the *Zelda* series certainly has a bit of everything, which keeps it interesting.

So it isn't necessary for the main character to be Toon Link just because the game is on a portable game system.

HARUHANA: Yeah, that's how it worked out.

But for* Tri Force Heroes, *the main character went back to being Toon Link.

HARUHANA: Actually we had our share of trouble for this title as well. For a while into production, the main character was the Link used in *A Link Between Worlds.*[11] But one day, Aonuma made an announcement: "We're going with Toon Link!"

ALL: [*laughter*]

***So who was in charge of the artwork for* A Link Between Worlds *and* Tri Force Heroes?**

NAKANO: I stepped back onto the field to work on them both.

You did, Nakano-san? Said something like "I can't be a manager right now!" or something?

NAKANO: It was more like "Let me draw too!" [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

NAKANO: So that's how I got back into being on the frontlines. But with Aonuma's announcement that the character designs would be changing partway into production, it was a time of turmoil in regards to artwork.

So there are no set rules in the production of a* Zelda *title.

HARUHANA: That might be the case. In fact, even on the home consoles, the design of Link has changed with every release.

TAKIZAWA: I think Link is a character that evolves over every release. And the world as well as the era he interacts with change as well. Even the game play itself is different from game to game, and the requirements for the artwork to go along with it. So there's nothing wrong with seeing a different-looking Link with every outing.

11. Rough sketch of *Tri Force Heroes* during development.

REVIEWING WHAT'S RECOGNIZABLE ABOUT *ZELDA*

***Breath of the Wild* (2017)**

So lastly, I'd like to ask about* Breath of the Wild. *I've been told that Wada-san will be taking charge of the artwork once again.

NAKANO: Yes, that was my intention all along. It seemed a natural progression after *Skyward Sword* that Wada-san was the right man for the job.

How did you feel being picked for the job?

WADA: I felt like, "Yay!" The truth is, I was really hoping for it. [*laughs*]

You must be more confident since this will be your second title.

WADA: Oh no, that's not the case at all. I mean, I saw the footage for *Breath of the Wild* when it was announced at E3 in 2014 and I thought to myself, "Is there anything for me to draw?"

Oh yeah, that game footage looked like a beautiful illustration. Is that why you thought that?

WADA: Yeah. When I first saw the footage, I thought the background behind Aonuma was an illustration, but when I looked carefully . . . "It's moving!"[12] [*laughs*]

ALL: [*laughter*]

NAKANO: Recently, computer graphics have become extremely high definition, so when it comes to making an illustration from them, I have to wonder what value it would have.

WADA: And the graphics on this title have cell shading, so having to come up with artwork that surpasses that has put a lot of pressure on me.

So being under such pressure, what was the first illustration you created?

WADA: It was an illustration of Link shooting an arrow [page 404]. I took the same layout and made three versions with different styles.[13]

So in the end, which one did you go with?

WADA: I went with the one that was a nice middle ground of being very neat but a little bit on the rougher side.

The pose of Link from behind is something we haven't seen before [page 405].

WADA: I created the various poses based on discussions I had with the art director, Takizawa-san. When you do an illustration from the back, you get to show all the equipment Link's carrying, so that was kind of exciting for the fans to see.

The shield is not the one we're used to seeing, and you can see a number of items on his waist. And he's holding a bow and arrow instead of the usual sword?

WADA: The bow is an important item this time around. It can be used right from the start and has many uses. Even in the 2014 promotional video, it's being used throughout. From the early stages Aonuma wanted to go with the bow as a primary weapon.

His outfit is also different, and he's not wearing his signature cap.

WADA: Not going with his green outfit and cap was a decision that took some courage. But in this game, Link can change outfits, so we wanted to emphasize how different this Link is going to look. A lot of work was put into this design to set him apart from his usual look. Since he can wield a variety of bows, swords, shields, and other equipment, deciding what to show took a long time.

So one of the key factors of the development of this* Zelda *title is reviewing what's recognizable about* Zelda *and rethinking it, and this illustration is an example of that.

TAKIZAWA: That's correct.

12. Video footage from E3 2014.

13. Rough sketches of Link with a bow. *From left:* "Image painted with a lot of precise detail," "a watercolor-like style," and "a rougher touch to make the image look wilder."

AN HOMAGE TO THE ORIGINAL *LEGEND OF ZELDA* ILLUSTRATION

***Breath of the Wild* (2017)**

Born in 1983 in Fukushima. Joined the company in 2009. First work was *Zangeki no Reginleiv* for the Wii (2010). His job was to create rough sketches to be sent to outside contract illustrators. Artists he respects are Jamie Hewlett, Yuichi Kumakura, and Atsuya Uki. His favorite illustration is a piece from *Skyward Sword*.

I want to put the new main illustration into a frame and display it [page 402]. I can feel that universality that Wada-san has been talking about.

WADA: Thank you very much.

The background looks like an oil painting.

WADA: In the game, the characters and the backgrounds are shaded differently, so I wanted to treat this main illustration the same way. That's why I gave the background an oil painting touch—so that Link stands out more on the cliff side.

And with the sunset hitting Link, he really pops.

TAKIZAWA: That was Wada-san's idea. To capture the feeling you get from the game graphics and play with the dance of the light to feature the main character rather than showing him in extreme detail. To depict a cinematic scene rather than going the traditional game illustration route that puts a lot of detail and lighting on the character's face. Allowing for the face to be hidden in shadow and using dramatic lighting to give it that cinematic feel.

I see. So this is why you chose to show Link climbing a cliff rather than swinging a sword. Also, it emphasizes the notion that Link can climb anywhere in this game.

WADA: Yes. First of all, in creating this illustration, I really wanted to show the contrast between what's changed from past *Zelda* titles and what's remained the same. If the thing that hasn't changed is Link, then the act of him climbing a cliff is something that's different. I wanted to combine the two in one image.

So you're saying that seeing the usual Link in a different outfit and doing brand-new actions will leave a strong impression.

WADA: I would be happy if that's what people take away from it. The real main character of this illustration is the setting, so Takizawa-san and I discussed it and decided that Link didn't need to be drawn very large.

So with this one illustration, you want to say, "You can go anywhere in this world."

WADA: Right. And what I depicted is true to the game, so everything you see in this illustration actually exists in the game. Looking at the illustration from that point of view could be entertaining as well.

HARUHANA: Like you can see that item over here and such?

WADA: Exactly. By the way, the illustration from *The Legend of Zelda* for the NES was mentioned earlier. This image was created using that illustration as a motif.

NAKANO: The slight redness of it is similar.

WADA: Actually, it looks more like it in the rough sketches.

Is that so?

WADA: Before we arrived at the final version, I went through several roughs, and some of them were even more similar.

HARUHANA: I remember that. Weren't you drawing Link in the same pose as the original Link?

WADA: That's right! The Link in *Breath of the Wild* is in the same pose as that image from the original *Legend of Zelda*.

HARUHANA: He was kneeling with a sword and shield.

WADA: In the end, I thought about it a lot, and the piece eventually came to be in the form that it's in now.

NAKANO: That's why when you look at this illustration, it feels like an homage to the original *Legend of Zelda* illustration.

Even the logo seems similar to the old design.

NAKANO: That's correct.

So basically, Wada-san, who was three years old at the time, took the image from the original* Legend of Zelda *for the NES and brought it back to life thirty years later?

WADA: It sounds really dramatic when you phrase it like that. [*laughs*]

Okay, here is the last question. As artists and illustrators working on the* Zelda *series, what do you hold as being most important to you?

WADA: As I said before, universality is very important to me, but also having the flexibility to change the art style with every title is important. I feel that every time I look at the artwork from one of the titles that Nakano-san worked on. The theme we want to convey differs from title to title, so if we want to pass that along to the player, the art style needs to change along with the message. So I think it's important not to push your artistic style onto others but to make them say, "Who drew this?" That is my strong belief and wish.

NAKANO: Creating artwork that appeals not only to the fans in this country but also to fans all over the world. I'm always thinking about that balance when I work. Of course, we're all Japanese, so I'm sure there will always be that "Made in Japan" nuance and feel.

Japan does have a unique way of using color . . .

NAKANO: Taking all that comes from our art and making use of our unique individuality and appeal to make it our strength. I want to present artwork to the world that will draw everyone in and pique their interest.

HARUHANA: What I want to say is similar to what Nakano-san said. Paying attention to the eyes of the world being on us is very important. You might say, "If that's the case, then explain Toon Link," but I think this in itself is an example of how we challenged the idea of how Link could be expressed, and it's part of the fun that is *The Legend of Zelda*. In other words, I think it's a first step in readying artwork for *Zelda* that will have a reaction worldwide and challenge the preconceived notion of what something in the *Zelda* franchise *should* be.

TAKIZAWA: I think the most important thing is to catch the attention of the person seeing the artwork of *Zelda* and allow them to imagine many things. To make them want to enter our world and go on an adventure—I think that's the best. Even before they play the game, I would love for them to get excited about the world they're about to enter. And giving this to the players who imagine our world and then showing them something even more grandiose—I think that's the goal for us creators to strive for.

Thank you all very much.

TAKIZAWA: Um . . . can I say one last thing?

Please, go ahead.

TAKIZAWA: As of 2016, *The Legend of Zelda* has had its thirtieth anniversary. I want to express our gratitude to the fans who have supported the series up to this point. We hope to continue creating new artwork to excite fans all over the world. As a creator, I want to continue our "adventure," [*laughs*] so please be on the lookout for more artwork and illustrations from the world of *Zelda*! **Δ**

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